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# Billy Al Bengston

**James Monte**

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Lytton Hall, November 26, 1968 — January 12, 1969  
Sponsored by the Contemporary Art Council

Corcoran Gallery — Dupont Center, Washington, D.C.  
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Billy Al Bengston,  
Drawing by  
Don Bachardy, 1967



## **Lenders to the exhibition**

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Ed Ruscha, Los Angeles  
Dr. and Mrs. M. L. Sherwood, Beverly Hills  
Laura Lee Stearns, Los Angeles

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Los Angeles County Museum of Art



## Foreword and Acknowledgements.

This exhibition is part of a continuing series of one- and two-man presentations of outstanding California artists. Peter Voukos, Edward Kienholz, John Mason, Robert Irwin, Kenneth Price and Wallace Berman have been shown here since the opening of the new Museum in April, 1965.

Billy Al Bengston's presence in Southern California over the past decade has exerted a powerfully distinctive force on local art. He has been instrumental in creating a special esthetic look which poignantly reflects the style of existence peculiar to Los Angeles, but certainly his influence has not been limited to this area. Bengston has inspired artists in many parts of the United States and abroad, especially with his successful experimentation using automobile lacquers and spray techniques. This retrospective exhibition brings together the artist's works from all phases of his production over the past ten years.

I would like to express my appreciation to James Monte, Assistant Curator of Modern Art, for organizing this exhibition, selecting the works, and writing the catalog essay. My thanks go also to Mrs. Gail R. Scott, Curatorial Assistant, for her help in all matters of organization, as well as for compiling the bibliography; and to Mrs. Jane Livingston, Assistant Curator of Modern Art, for editing the catalog text. Mrs. Betty Asher participated in many phases of the project. I would also like to acknowledge Ed Cornachio and the photography staff of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for their cooperation in photographing most of the paintings in the exhibition. A special note of thanks goes to Ed Ruscha, well-known Los Angeles artist, for designing this unique catalog, and to Frank Gehry for his imaginative installation plan. To the lenders to the exhibition I am especially grateful, particularly Sterling Holloway, who was one of the first and most faithful collectors of Bengston's work and whose loans to this exhibition have been so generous.

Maurice Tuchman

**Billy Al Bengston**

Billy Al Bengston's career began at Manual Arts High School, a vocational training school in Los Angeles, which included within its largely industrial arts curriculum an excellently conceived Fine Arts program. This unique program offered by the school afforded students such as Jackson Pollock and Philip Guston as well as Bengston the opportunity to develop sophisticated skills within the secondary school system.

For Bengston, graduation from high school and enrollment in college in the fall of 1952 was the beginning of a series of misadventures with higher education. Dissatisfied with college, Bengston dropped out after a few weeks and found work as a displayman in Desmond's Department Store in Los Angeles. In the spring of 1953, Bengston left the store and worked throughout the summer season as a beach attendant. The opportunity to surf and swim and earn a living as well was irresistible for Bengston. An important friendship developed that summer between Bengston and the sculptor, Kenneth Price. These two young artists were to become friends and allies, sharing a common interest in vanguard art and working with Peter Voukos, the sculptor-ceramicist, and a handful of others to produce a virtual renaissance in ceramics on the West Coast.

After two years' attendance at Los Angeles City College from 1953 to 1955, Bengston enrolled in the fall of 1955 at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California. Two artists on the faculty, Richard Diebenkorn and Sabro Hasegawa, were in Bengston's words, "influences on me, with Diebenkorn showing me how I might physically approach painting and Hasegawa by his example as a person and thinker."

The rewards were rich within the painting faculty and less than fruitful within the ceramics department. Bengston, with alarming alacrity, completed a semester's course of proposed ceramics problems in two working days and proceeded with equal swiftness to deplete the department's stock of clay body. His radical aesthetic, in combination with his already well developed skill, disrupted the pace of the department and taxed the faculty to such an extent that they asked him to leave. Bengston complied with the request and left both the ceramics department and the school one year after entering.

In another attempt at art school in the fall of 1956, this time at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, he studied with Peter Voukos. Bengston had at last met a ceramics teacher whose enormous creative energy more than matched his own. The handful of students who met in Voukos' class in the basement of the Otis Art Institute, at peak periods turned out scores of pots in single sittings. Perhaps it was too good to last and he was once again asked to leave school. With his departure from art school for the final time Bengston gave up ceramics and concentrated on painting.

The carry-over from ceramics to painting should not be underestimated when one assesses Bengston's art. He has mentioned in conversation the important influence the Raku and Oribe bowl forms had on the subsequent development of his own pottery and painting. The rich and spontaneous surface incident so highly prized in these two Japanese bowl forms are carried over in Bengston's ceramics as well as paintings. The small, richly textured painting **Sunset at Sunset Plaza Drive** (lent by Sterling Holloway) is the earliest work in the exhibition containing the centered, equal-sided **plus** or **cross** marks seen on the earlier ceramic surfaces. The potential usefulness of these early signature marks, as the artist calls them, did in fact act as a root source for the heart, iris and chevron

series of paintings which were to follow in the ensuing eleven years.

It is worthwhile to note that Bengston attended art school after the wave of World War II G.I. Bill students had completed their training. The best of these students were committed to an expressionist ethos and were, at the onset of Bengston's art school training, teachers engaged in revolutionizing art school curricula on the West Coast. Bengston was certainly in a position to ascertain the implications of the change and was himself a victim of the wrench between the conservative teaching element and the radical newcomers. Of the talented young artists to emerge in the middle to late nineteen-fifties on the West Coast, Bengston was the first to have produced, as a student totally committed to abstract-expressionism, a body of work wholly vanguard and yet seemingly outside the expressionist ethos. It is difficult to communicate the emotional and intellectual temper of the West Coast art world in the late nineteen-fifties; suffice it to say that Bengston was labeled a heretic by artists who were attempting to absorb the lessons of abstract-expressionism, and was considered a maniacal freak by the conservative art establishment in Southern California. His own thoughts in 1968 about his position as Peck's Bad Boy to both conservative and radical camps eight years ago are revealing. "I believed in the lessons of the New York artists, particularly de Kooning. That's where I came into the picture. What their paintings said and what they verbalized was a complete openness, so within that openness I began making my own paintings." By "openness" Bengston had in mind a series of esthetic breakthroughs so eccentric-appearing to the eyes of the California art community that he apparently broke with rules yet to be formulated.

Bengston generously credits Craig Kauffman's paintings of 1957 as offering a clue to how he might proceed. Kauffman's paintings at that time held a solution to the then prevalent all-over scattered stroking and troweling of impastoed oil pigment. The scattered forms of Still, Pollock, de Kooning, Diebenkorn and Hassel Smith were developing into a cliché among younger artists. Kauffman, although retaining the loose handling of the older artists, concentrated the intensity of execution in the center of the canvas and developed a large, loose biomorphic shape which hung with ease and little visual connection to the four sides of the canvas support. Bengston had applied strips of clay to vase, cup and bowl shapes which, when seen dead on, produced the same centered visual effect. The loose asymmetry of Kauffman's pictures, which verged on symmetry by the very nature of their centeredness, provided Bengston with a way of proceeding to an even more radically symmetrical format.

In 1958 Bengston first saw the encaustic flags and targets painted in the mid-fifties by Jasper Johns. These works provided him with a further clue as to how a painting could be made and on what level avant-garde art could function outside of wholly loosened all-over abstract configuration.

In noting Bengston's movement away from an increasingly vitiated expressionist tradition, it is evident that, as with Craig Kauffman, Edward Kienholz, Kenneth Price and other Southern California artists, a general shift to new materials such as lacquers, epoxies and vacuum formed plastics helped clear the path for new developments in the look of his art. In Bengston's case, as was true of a number of the other local artists, the nature, or core, of his art remained relatively unchanged. However, this shift to new materials so radically altered the surfaces of these artists' works that at various points in time between the last decade and the present moment a terrific feedback occurred which has affected not only the skin or surface of their objects, but has radically altered their earlier conceptions and ambitions. An intense concern for factual **surface** verisimilitude, taking forms as varied as the apparently mystical color evocations of Robert Irwin, and the barbed extirpations from the past and present in the tableaux of Edward Kienholz, characterizes the intensely creative circle of which Bengston is a primary member.

The obsessively idealistic conviction that color, surface quality, and inherent material corporeality can carry the entire weight of a total and satisfying art experience is posited with a vengeance by Bengston and his colleagues. This posi-



Vase black, brown,  
white glazed stoneware,  
1957 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high

tion is of course not unique to Southern California artists, but it is not held with such overwhelming zeal anywhere else in the world. One of the side issues which seems to enforce such an hypothesis is Bengston's, as well as his peers', attitude toward experimentation. The concept, held in many quarters throughout the art world, that art objects may be experimental in design and fabrication, and that subsequent exhibition of the perhaps conceptually clear but fitfully executed objects is validated **because** of their experimental state, is wholly at odds with Southern California idealism. Only cold aesthetic cash is fit to be shown within the latter terms. A complete assimilation of procedural experiment is required of the end product, wherein the concept is turned into as nearly perfect an object as possible before it is used, looked at, or considered as art. (Like the advanced technology of the aerospace industries, the relationship of the experimental process to the completed object is scrupulously measured, tested and codified before the product is considered usable.)

Bengston considers his paintings as being aesthetically useful in direct proportion to how physically perfected they are. It follows that he values a state of affairs whereby quality is judged by the perfectness of the painted surface, much as one admires the look of a carefully engineered industrial tool apart from its known function. The sensuously appealing, often pretty surfaces of Bengston's pictures are implicitly coupled with a toolmaker's or engineer's, notion about the perfectability of the product. At the very heart of Bengston's machine aesthetic, humanized by an erotic sweetness, are ideas about what synthetic materials and surfaces can and will mean to art and artists. The nineteenth century genre picturesqueness of wood, brick, clay and stone set against a backdrop of bubbling brooks and coiffed greenery will increasingly give way to the picturesqueness of Stanley Kubrick's revolving sets in the film **2001**. The purist style of artists like Ozenfant and Jeanneret appear wistfully sentimental when juxtaposed with the hard brilliance of Bengston's synthetic lacquer surfaces. If the early moderns did attempt to foresee the future look of art, industrial objects and architecture, it was with an ingenuously utopian assumption that **art** would by extension alter man's environment. This ideal must have seemed attainable to artists working in the first two or three decades of this century. That the perversity of events since that time has rendered their vision partially or wholly bankrupt has had its effect on Los Angeles artists, and particularly on Bengston (the literary community kvetches about this state of affairs while Bengston uses it as subject matter).

In the endeavor to forge his own artistic identity, Bengston appropriated a closed, individual portfolio of emblems which has in the past included the cross, the heart, the iris, and, most familiarly, the stacked chevron. The only series of mature works not incorporating these images is a body of work completed in 1961 depicting various components of a B.S.A. motorcycle, culminating in a full portrait of a B.S.A. entitled **Skinny's 21** (lent by Dr. and Mrs. Merle S. Glick).

Bengston's ubiquitous emblem usually occupies a fraction of the entire picture at the center, and is either immersed within lacquered depths, floats decal-like atop the lacquer, or is differentiated from its surroundings by the intrusion of oil paint, contrasting with the polished field. He uses every manner of carefully laid brush strokes in combination with smooth spray-gun washes of color, topped with coats of clear lacquer to produce incredibly rich and lustrous surfaces. The emblem motif is often centered in a field which is itself a complex sign. (I refer literally to **sign** in the sense that applies to advertising goods or services. **Sign** is perhaps too perfunctory a word to describe a visual phenomenon which amounts virtually to an American totemic fetish.)

Bengston's appropriation of a very special sign imagery offers a number of clues to his working methods and his aesthetic decisions. He uses layers of sign systems within which he places his emblems. For instance, a work such as **Busby**, 1963, is inspired by the type of image created at least forty years ago by manufacturers of pin-ball machines. **Chaney** (lent by Sterling Holloway), of 1962, seems to be primarily inspired by the theatre marquee sign associated with movie

palaces and, in their most sumptuous form, with Nevada gambling casinos. It should be understood that Bengston does not literally **copy** specific signs, but rather improvises on folk design devices. Generally he favors primitive and usually symmetrical layouts, with the various borders and design motifs repeated with an equalized visual tightness throughout the picture surface. In this way the spirit of Bengston's paintings has an affinity to that of Roy Lichtenstein's early pop pictures, such as **Roto-broil**, in which a certain "dumb" placement of elements evokes the Sears, Roebuck sensibility of American mass culture. Unlike Lichtenstein and other pop artists, Bengston chooses to keep his pictures in a medial domain between abstract art and pop figuration, with the exception of the serialization of the B.S.A. motorcycle. In choosing to remain outside both pop orthodoxy and current abstract art, Bengston turned instead to a lexicon of forms which are basically abstract, but which, in juxtaposition, remind one of the bizarre visual material which foists goods and services on the urban proletariat. One can only add that life in Southern California, where there exists a stupefying glut of data with which to work, is perfectly suited for Bengston's erotic conundrums.

Unlike the earlier cross and later chevron series, the Dracula paintings thrust themselves on the viewer with a smothering sweetness. The central emblem in these works appears to be a biomorphized variant of the common Iris flower. The meanings of the word **Iris** in both French and Latin (the goddess, the rainbow, a sweet smelling plant) give further credence to a misreading of the motif. In these paintings the saccharine color, carefully adjusted hue against hue, recalls what might be a poetic combination of the meanings of the word **Iris** in three languages. What is seemingly true is actually false in the Iris pictures; the fact is that Bengston has fashioned the motif from the kitsch metaphysics used by Hollywood scenario writers to propel the Transylvanian Count Dracula from bat to human, as seen in the motion picture, **Count Dracula**. Bengston's pseudo-Iris form is a depiction of the moment in which the bat dissolves in space and a flashing biomorphic form replaces it before the appearance of the dreaded count materializes on the motion picture screen. The iconographic overtones of the Dracula series are not present in the Heart or Valentine paintings, the Chevron paintings, or the **Canto Indento** series.

As Bengston proceeded from the first of the Dracula series (**Count Dracula I**, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rowan) to the last, it is evident that the transfiguration of form is a personal interpretation of a fragment of public property, i.e., a popular movie. Each of the later series of paintings is created in the same manner with one difference: namely, the later motifs are extremely popular symbols which intrude on the consciousness of society as naturally as a mountain or a vanilla ice cream cone. The relative obscurity of the Dracula symbol contrasts sharply with the ultra-familiar chevron and valentine symbols.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Bengston's oeuvre is that the pictures themselves refuse to become either wholly abstract or wholly figurative. The difficulty, of course, exists in the mind of the viewer and not in the paintings themselves. A first viewing of a body of Bengston's work is puzzling because one is astounded at the richness of their brushed, lacquered and polished surfaces. When viewing a picture such as **Big Duke** (lent by Sterling Holloway) for example, a deeper look reveals a chevron embedded within the rich color. A puzzling interval ensues — one questions the apparent intrusion of an emblematic device floating freely within or over the lacquered depths of color. The mind associates the chevron with a military rank, the heart with a valentine or a religious symbol stripped of thorny encumbrances. It is virtually impossible to suppress the impulse to read the emblems.

The disingenuousness of Bengston's emblems is accounted for by two factors. The first of these is a studied irony about the very nature of the emblem as a vehicle which embodies an idea. In other words, if a viewer chooses to believe that the heart shape represents an upbeat manifestation of the idea of a bleeding

heart, he is wrong. Bengston's emblems are not there to be read. The second attribute consists of the kind of mass disingenuousness which occurs in contemporary advertising and graphic design. The ad agency uses emblems to sell products; the theory being that **a significant emblem equals a significant product**. Bengston uses the emblem as a peg on which he hangs his aesthetic hat. It has further use as a personal logo, trademark and symbol of himself. As Bengston explains, he need not sign his pictures since they are **signed** literally and figuratively on a multiplicity of levels.

In exploring the nature of Bengston's emblems, other issues emerge. In the advertising system, the emblem exists as a symbol for desirability and prestige, a cycle which terminates when the emblem becomes the actual product the advertiser wishes the customer to buy. The buyer has bought his notion of the product as well as the object itself. Bengston seemingly puns on the whole system. The sensuously appealing object (painting) contains a large, centered and baffling trademark (emblem) which instead of hinting at or suggesting a brilliant product, perversely calls attention to its enigmatically dumb self.

In the **Canto Indento** series, Bengston's audacity is seen **in extremis**. In this, his most recent series of works, the familiar supports of either canvas on stretcher bars or cradled sheets of pressed wood are dispensed with in favor simply of thin sheets of aluminum. Bengston begins working on these **Dentos** by sculpturing the metal — hammering, folding and crumpling it until the appropriate surface incident is achieved. Masses of shiny wrinkles create a play of reflected light, while occasionally the surface is actually punctured. Bengston then proceeds as in the past with priming the metal. Templates are cut to mask areas where overspray is not desired and masking tape is used to isolate specific areas. Coats of synthetic automobile lacquer are added one upon the other until a lustrous and variegated surface is achieved. The spectator is forced to read the shiny highlights and perforations as an integral part of the total design in spite of the fact that the actual surfaces appear, disappear and are damaged. Neither the flayed surfaces of a de Kooning painting nor the battered auto remnants of a John Chamberlain sculpture prepare the viewer for the sinking of the senses which accompanies a first viewing of a Bengston **Dento**. Even after repeated viewings, there remains a large residue of pathos which illuminates the very center of the visual experience.

Perhaps the pathos can be explained by a nearly inadmissible coupling of painterly pride and willful destruction. The traditional role of the art object as a culmination of noble aims is called into question by the **Canto Indento** series. The unique history of each work is synthetically extended in time by a simultaneous reading of conception, destruction and creation. The poignancy of the works is lessened only slightly when the viewer is made to realize that the entire process was a willed decision.

The malevolent nature of Bengston's art is couched in boudoir color and inherently eccentric form. Bengston suppresses a tendency toward the overt depiction of malignancy and instead metes out the emotive force carefully, serializes it, sets restrictive limits on its use and in other ways regulates it. By engineering or manipulating the uses to which psychic malevolence is used in art, by juxtaposing it with humor or playfulness, the artist is able to domesticate or at least sublimate this virulence to a great degree. The pathos of Bengston's **Canto Indento** works lies in the fact that suddenly the artist could not **build** a picture with rage, but instead felt compelled first to inflict the act of violence on the picture, and then to proceed with the creative act. The sudden unmasking or unleashing of such willfulness is disarming. As one grows accustomed to the capriciousness of punctures and dents on the surface of the pictures, it becomes apparent (especially in the latest **Dentos**) that Bengston is spraying color with increased looseness, thereby equalizing the applied design and configuration of the painted surface.

JAMES MONTE

## Catalog of Works

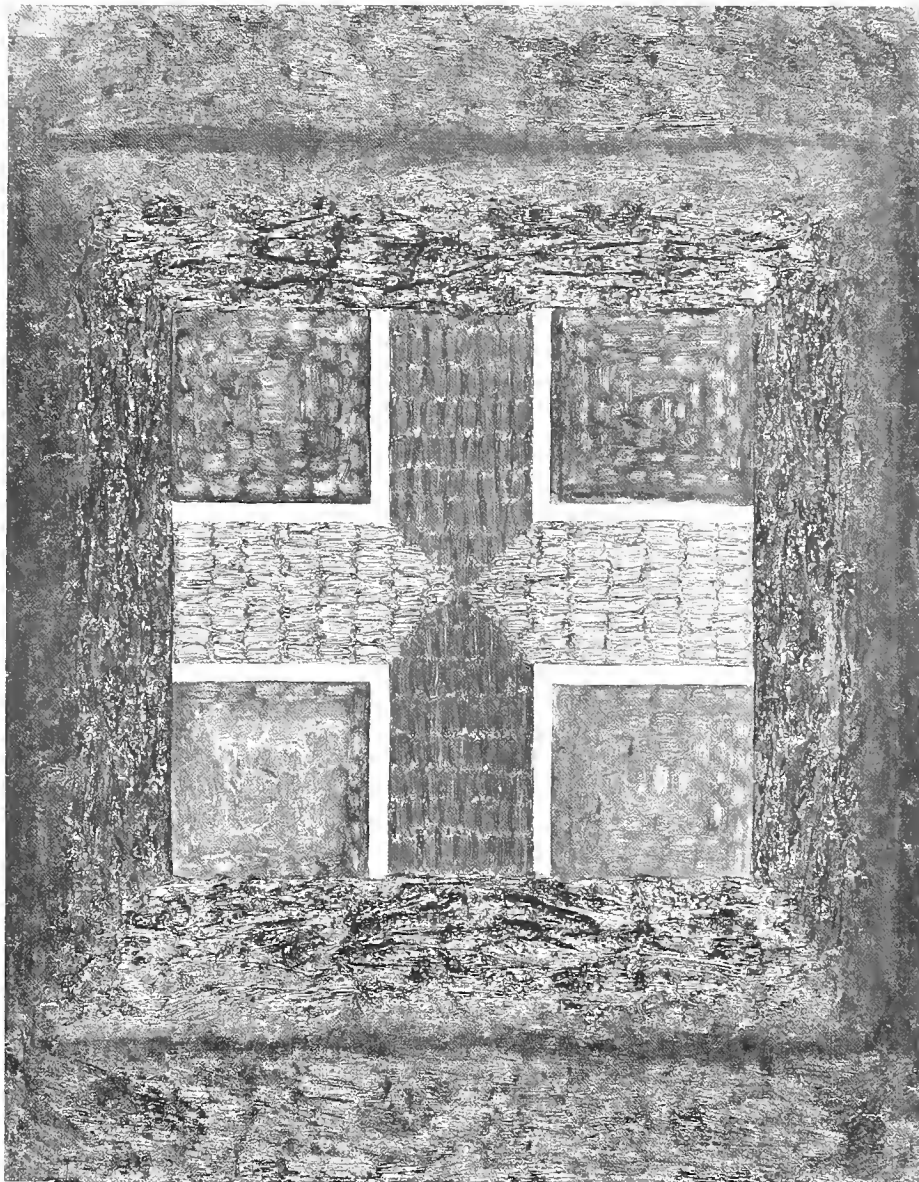
1. **Untitled Collage** 1958  
paper, tape, watercolor, glass, wood  
18 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 16"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
2. **Sunset at Sunset Plaza Drive** about 1959  
oil on canvas  
17" x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ "  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
3. **Brigitte** 1959  
oil on canvas  
17" x 13"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Irving Blum, Los Angeles
4. **Kim** 1960  
oil on canvas  
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
5. **Solia** 1960  
oil on canvas  
21" x 21"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
6. **Mae** 1959  
watercolor on paper  
32" x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
7. **Ingrid** 1960  
oil on canvas  
15" x 13"  
Lent by Robert W. Irwin, Venice, California
8. **Ava** 1960  
oil on canvas  
15" x 13"  
Lent by the Kleiner Foundation, Beverly Hills
9. **Count Dracula at the Chessboard** 1960  
oil on canvas  
18" x 16"  
Lent by the L. M. Asher Family, Los Angeles
10. **Count Dracula I** 1960  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Rowan, Pasadena
11. **Count Dracula II** 1960  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
12. **Count Dracula III** 1962  
oil on canvas  
42" x 42"  
Lent by Mrs. Betty Gold, Newport Beach
13. **Big Duke** 1960  
magna, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
14. **Elvis** 1961  
polymer, lacquer on masonite  
24" x 24"  
Lent by Robert W. Irwin, Venice, California
15. **Tyrone** 1961  
lacquer, oil on masonite  
24" x 24"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
16. **Kato** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
17. **Belle Star** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
18. **Zachary** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
72" x 72"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
19. **Lester** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John C. Denman, Bellevue, Washington
20. **Clint** 1961  
polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
21. **Carburetor Floatbowl** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
22. **Gas Tank and Tachometer II** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Ed Ruscha, Los Angeles
23. **BSA** 1961  
oil on canvas  
36" x 34"  
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Merle S. Glick, Los Angeles
24. **Skinny's 21** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. M. L. Sherwood, Beverly Hills



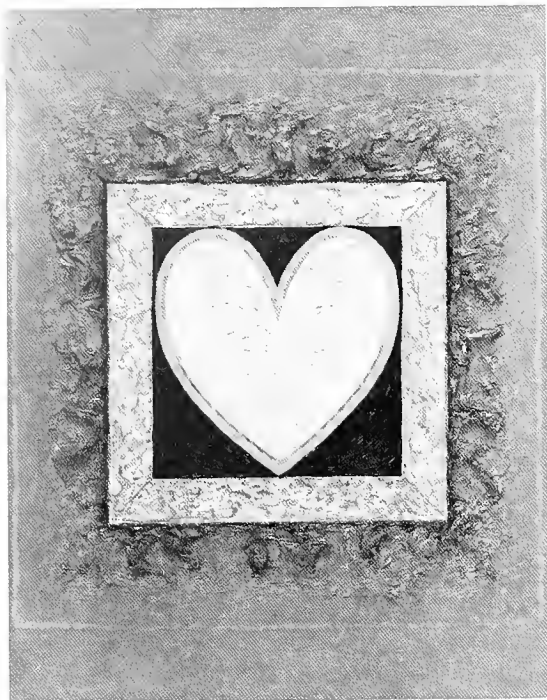
25. **Bela** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
62½" x 48½"  
Lent by Ed Moses, Santa Monica
26. **Busby** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
80" x 60"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
27. **Boris** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
62½" x 48½"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
28. **Humphrey** 1963  
oil, liquetex, enamel, lacquer on masonite  
80" x 60"  
Lent by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art,  
Contemporary Art Council Funds
29. **Altala** 1964  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
46¾" x 31¾"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
30. **Chaney** 1965  
oil, lacquer on masonite  
60" x 45½"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
31. **Tubesteak** 1965  
lacquer on formica  
37" x 28"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
32. **Holy Smoke** 1966  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Laura Lee Stearns, Los Angeles
33. **John** 1966  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
34" x 31"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach
34. **Little Big Horn** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Richard O Neill, Los Angeles
35. **Angel & The Badman** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Charles Cowles, New York
36. **Pittsburgh** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
26" x 25"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
37. **Sea Chase** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
26" x 25"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
38. **In Old California** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
18" x 16¾"  
Lent by Jackie and Ulf Greber, Beverly Hills
39. **The High and The Mighty** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
40. **Big Jim McLain** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Jame C. Lee, Dallas
41. **Comanchero** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
34" x 31"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Inch, Pacific Palisades
42. **The Seo Spoiler** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
43. **Shepherd of the Hills** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
12" x 11¼"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California
44. **Lady From Louisiana** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
12" x 11¼"  
Lent by Mrs. Andrew Fuller, New York
45. **Hatari** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
87" x 77"  
Lent by the Kleiner Foundation, Beverly Hills
46. **Three Faces West** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
87" x 77"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



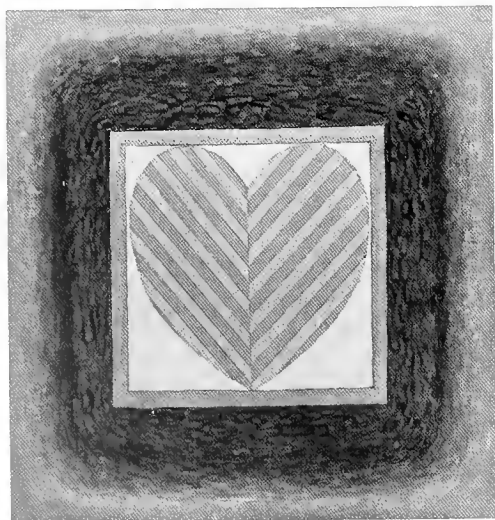
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Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



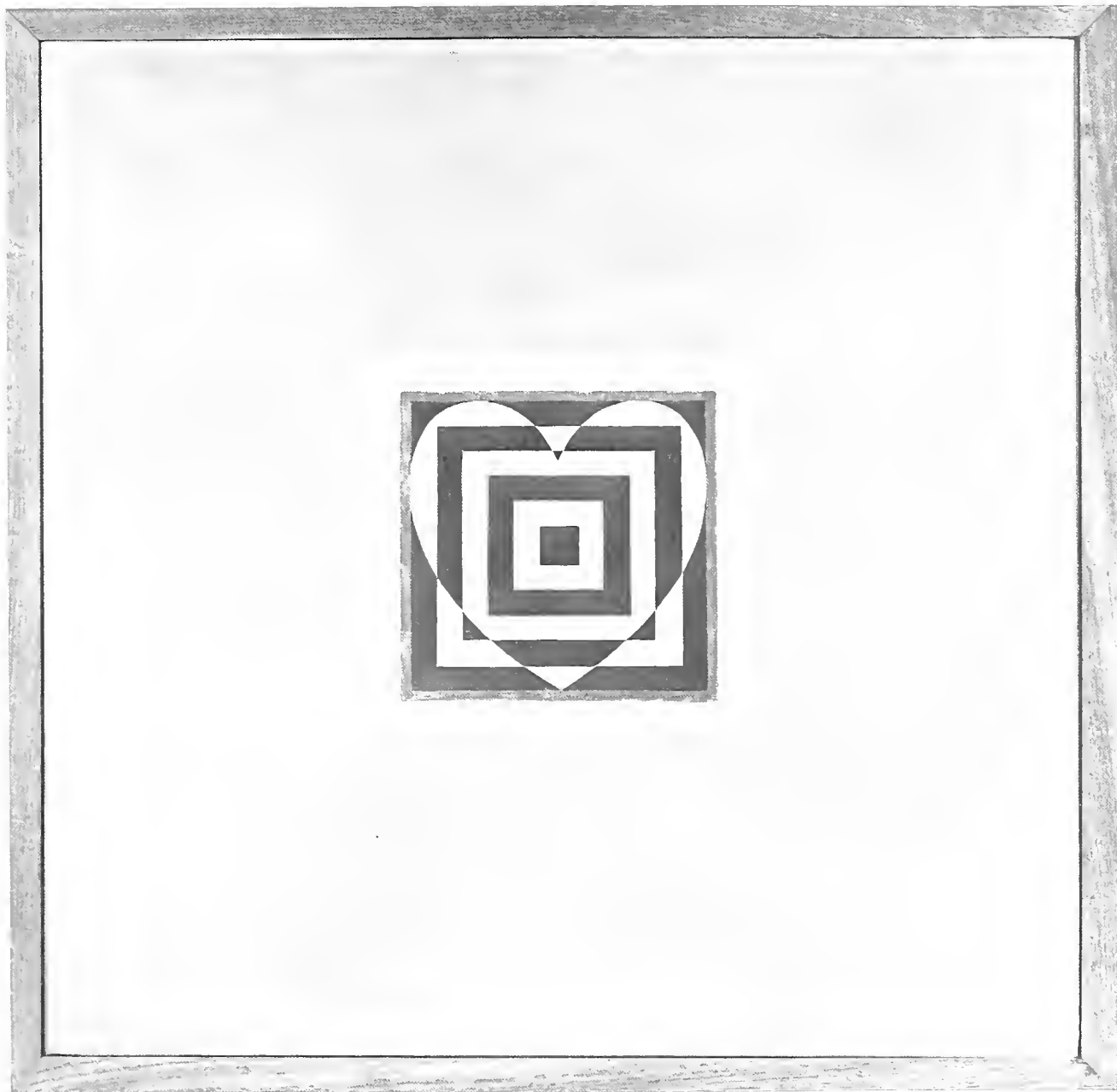
2. **Sunset at Sunset Plaza Drive** about 1959  
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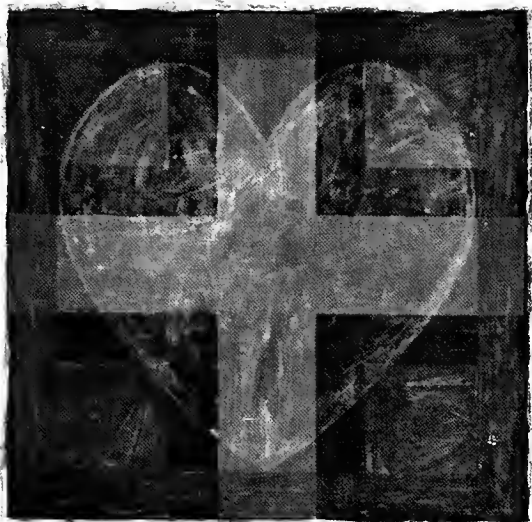
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17" x 13"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Irving Blum, Los Angeles



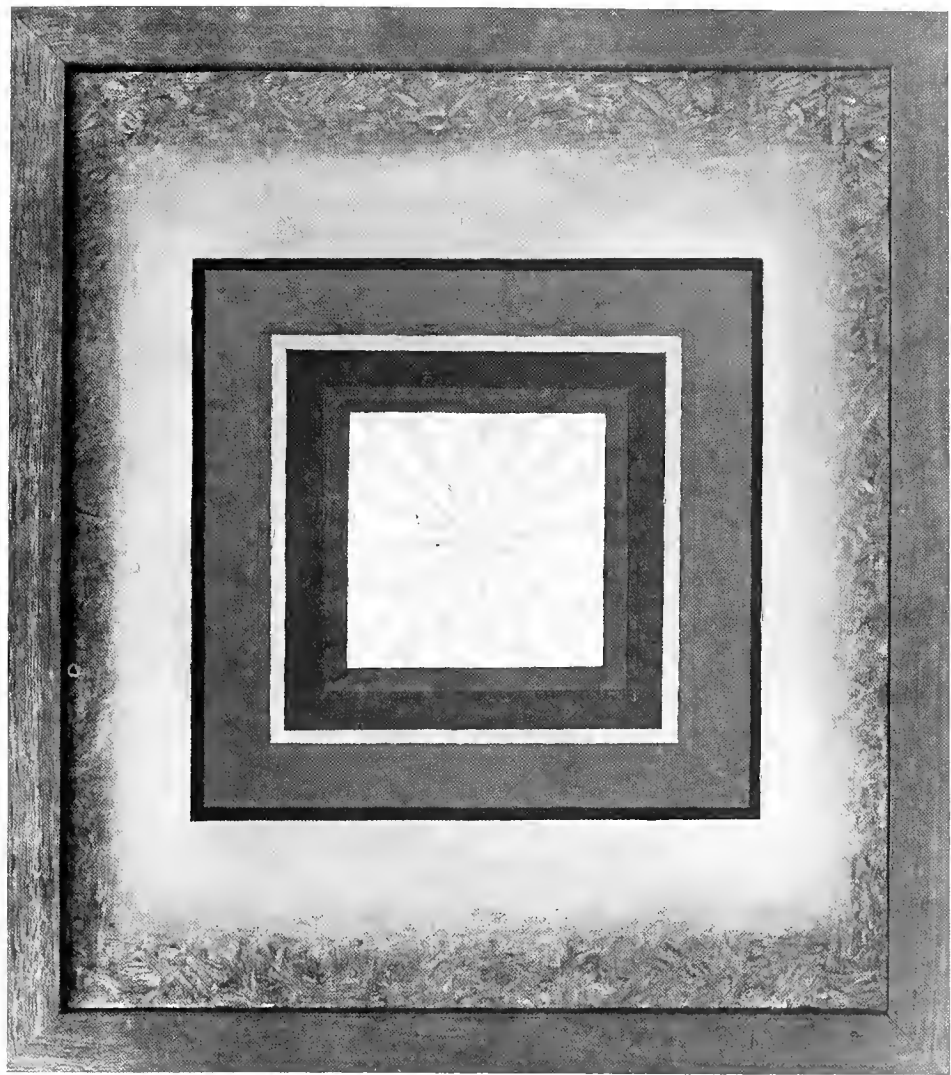
4. **Kim** 1960  
oil on canvas  
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach



5 **Sofia** 1960  
oil on canvas  
21" x 21"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



6. **Mae** 1959  
watercolor on paper  
32" x 23½"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

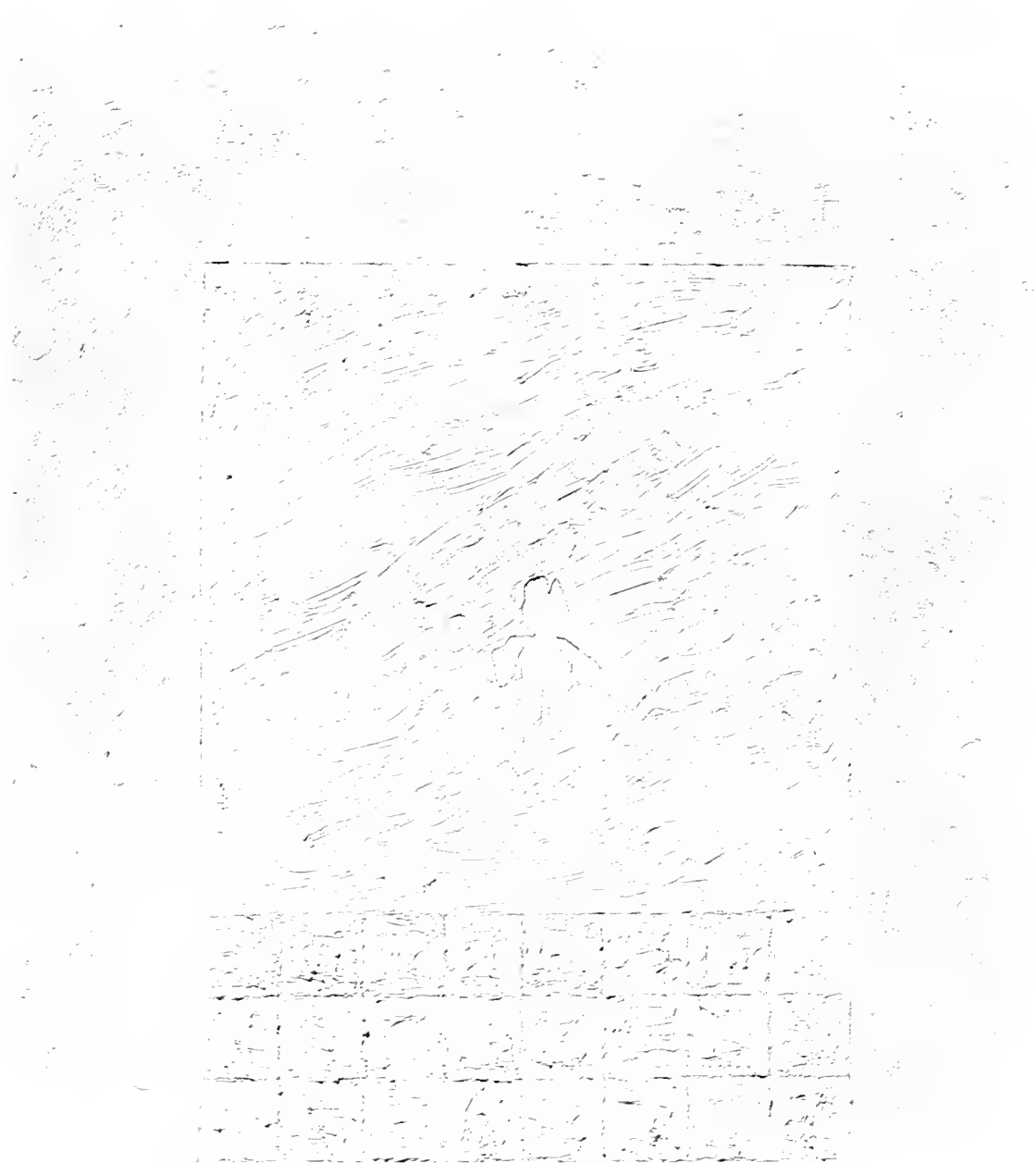


7. **Ingrid** 1960  
oil on canvas  
15" x 13"  
Lent by Robert W. Irwin, Venice, California

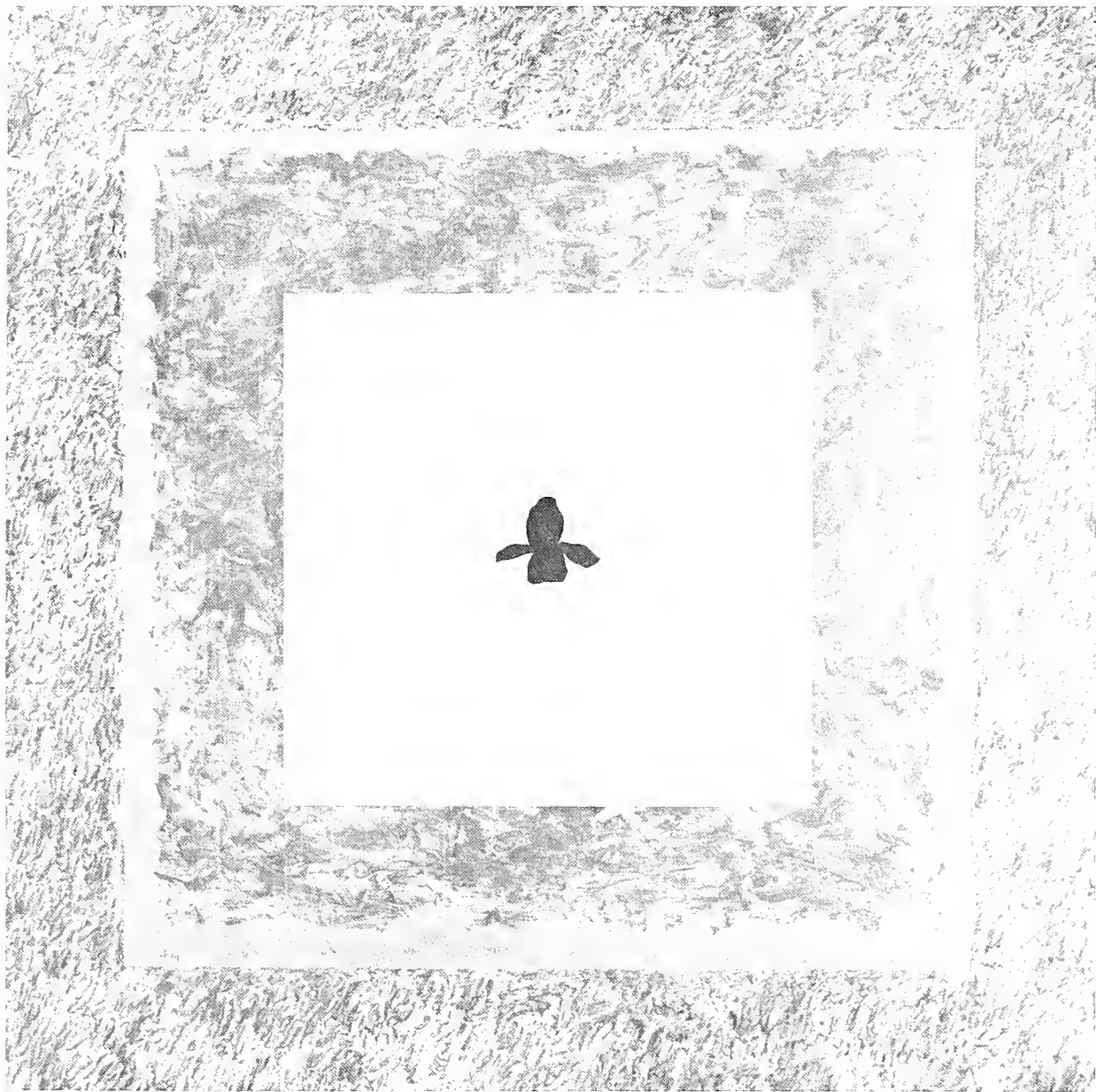


8. **Ava** 1960  
oil on canvas  
15" x 13"  
Lent by the Kleiner Foundation, Beverly Hills

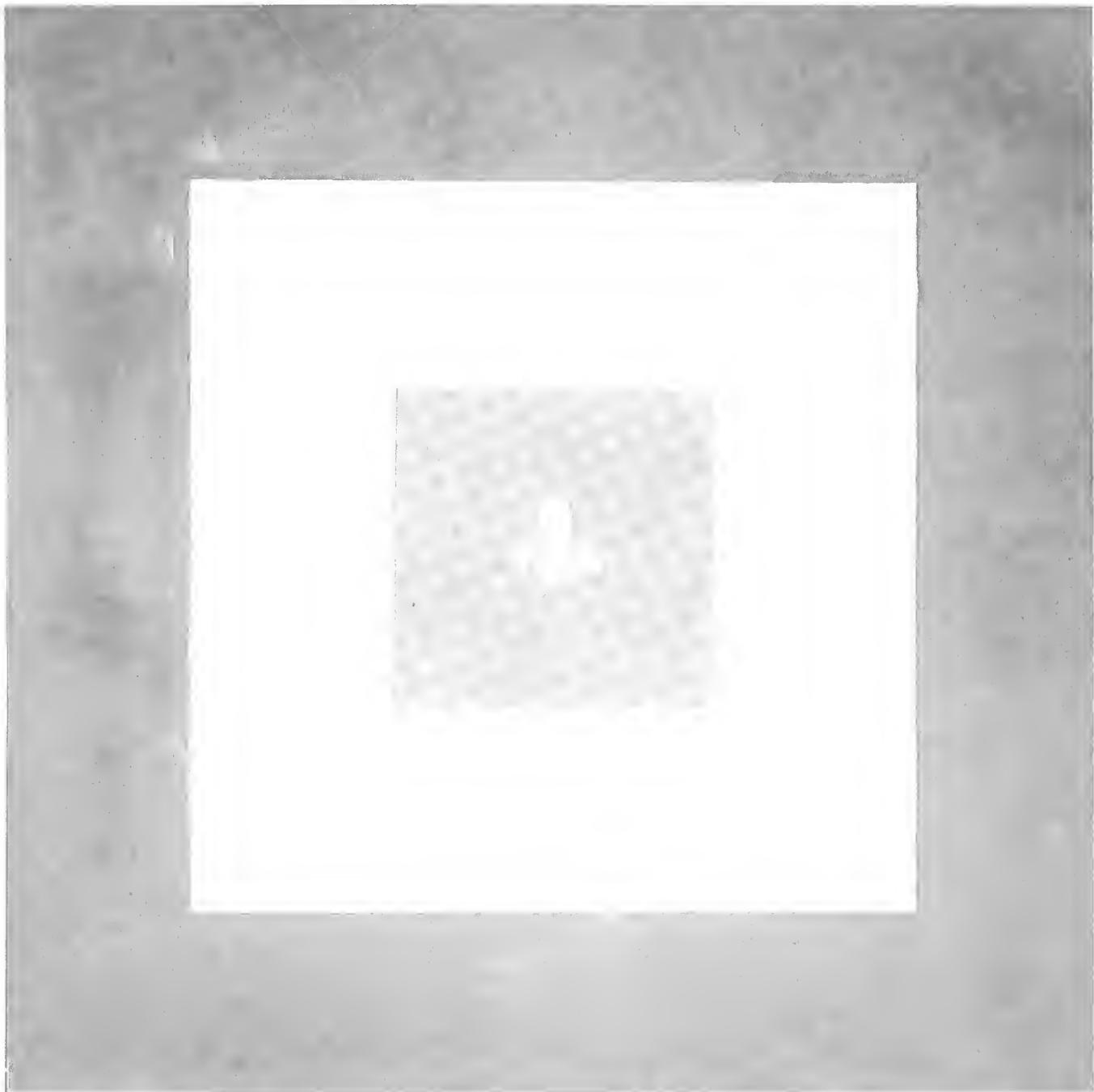




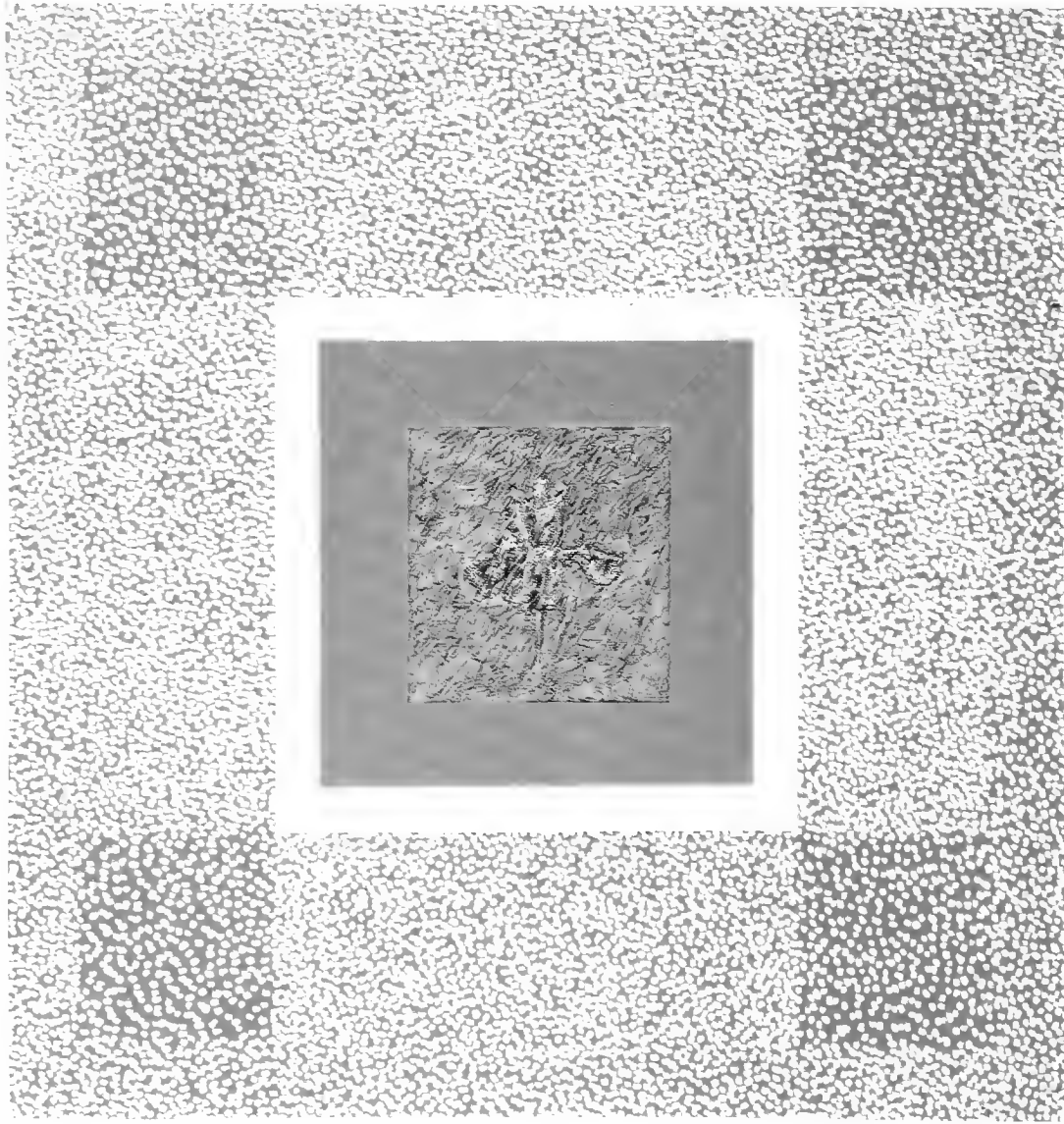
9. **Count Dracula at the Chessboard** 1960  
oil on canvas  
18" x 16"  
Lent by the L. M. Asher Family, Los Angeles



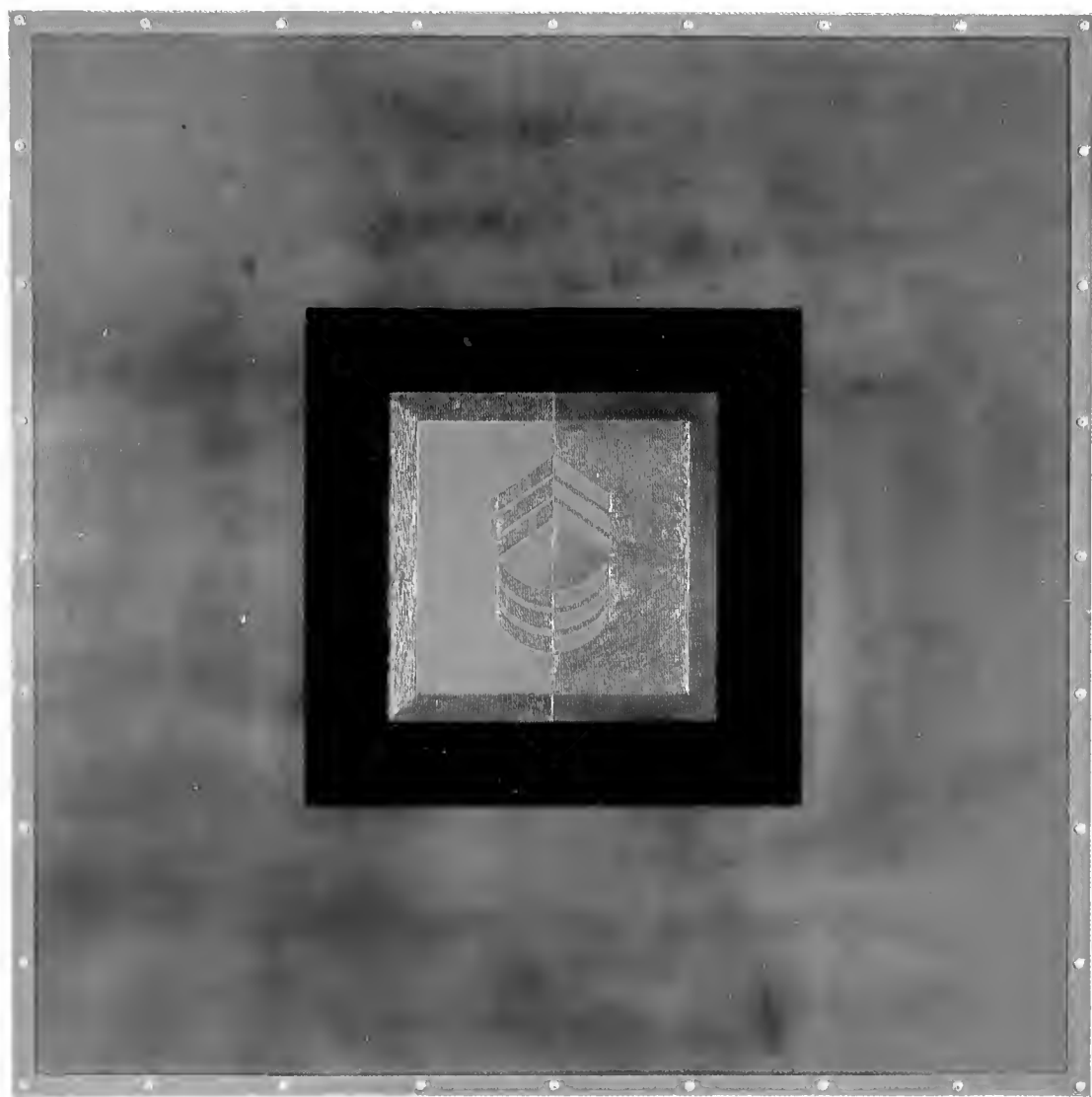
10. **Count Dracula I** 1960  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Rowan, Pasadena



11. **Count Dracula II** 1960  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway,  
South Laguna Beach



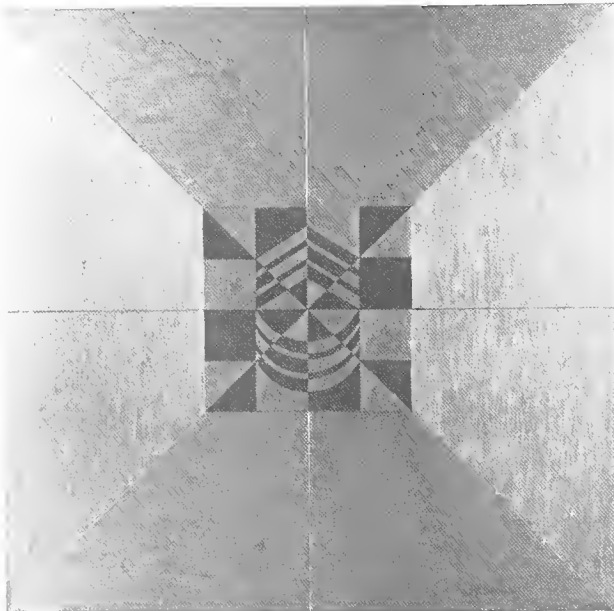
12. **Count Dracula III** 1962  
oil on canvas  
42" x 42"  
Lent by Mrs. Betty Gold, Newport Beach



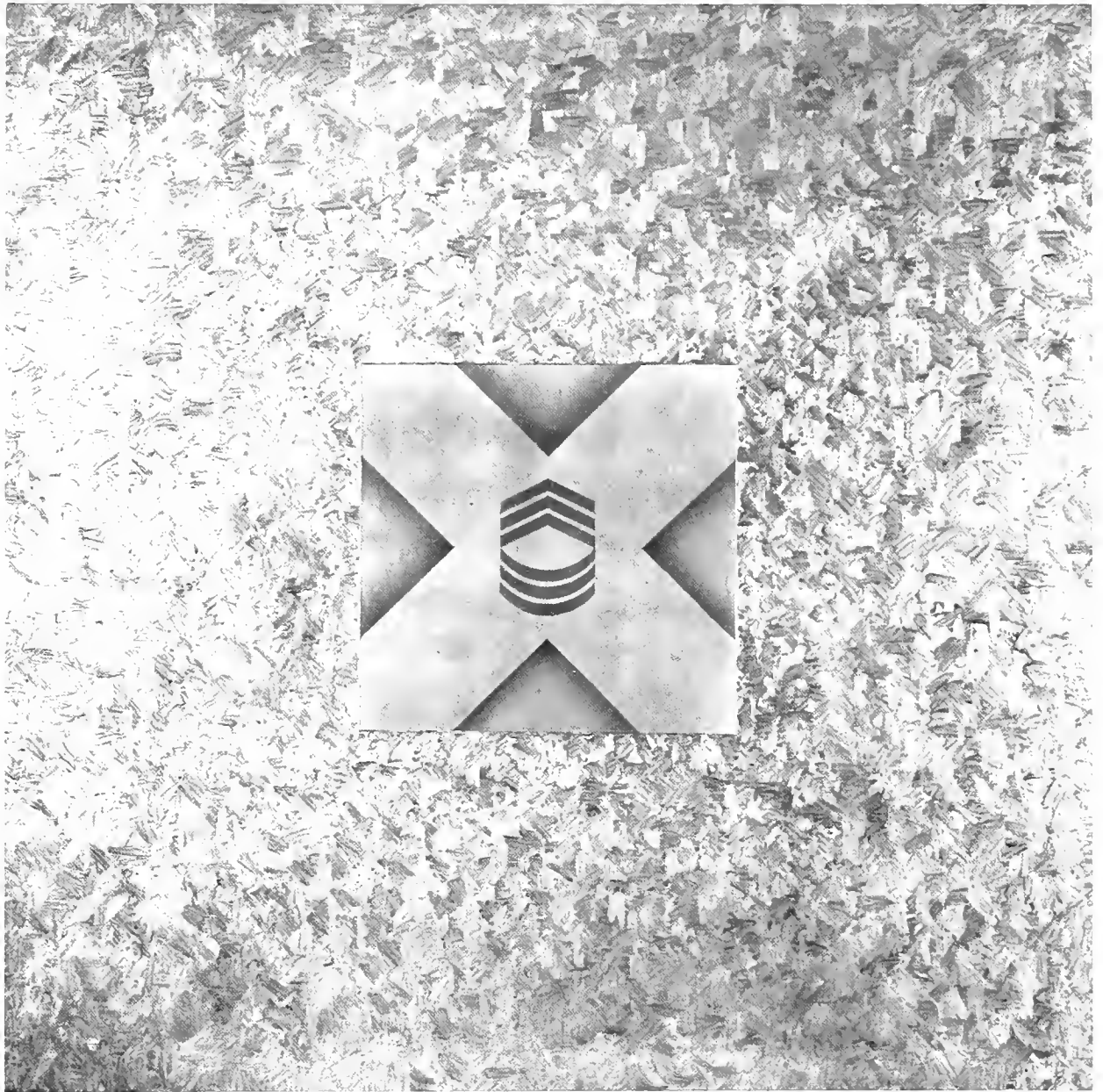
13. **Big Duke** 1960  
magna, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach



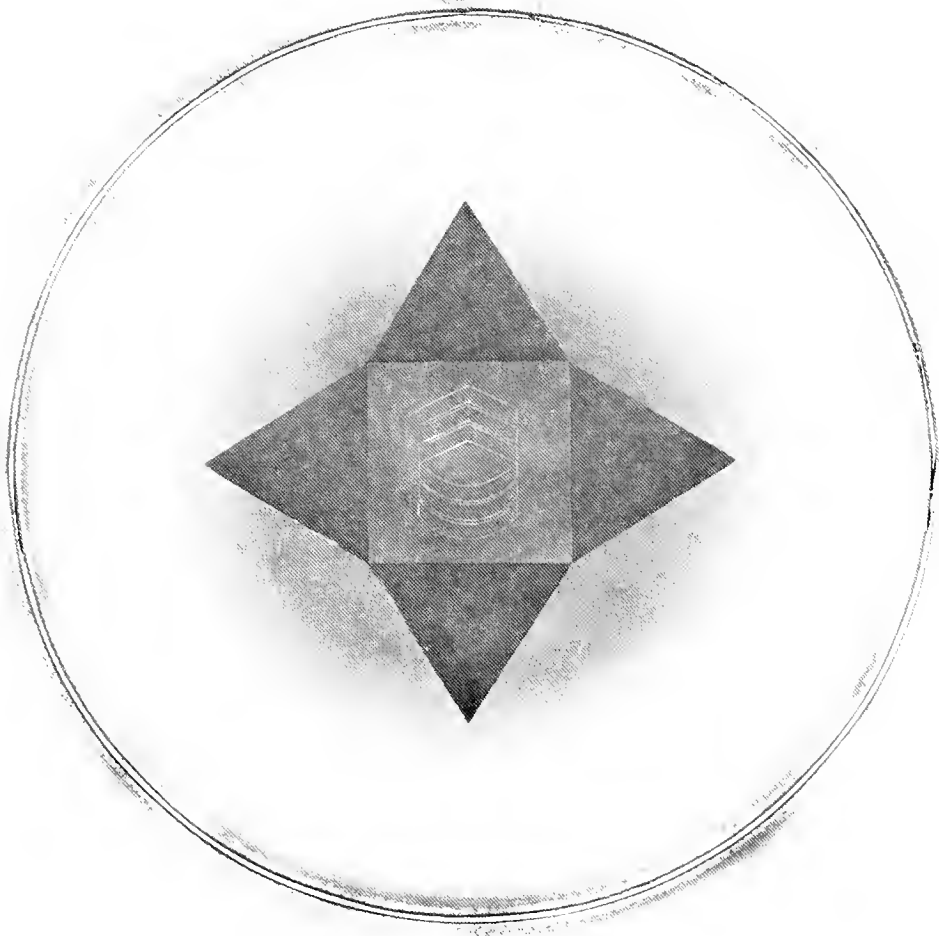
14. **Elvis** 1961  
polymer, lacquer on masonite  
24" x 24"  
Lent by Robert W. Irwin, Venice, California



15. **Tyronne** 1961  
lacquer, oil on masonite  
24" x 24"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



16. **Kato** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

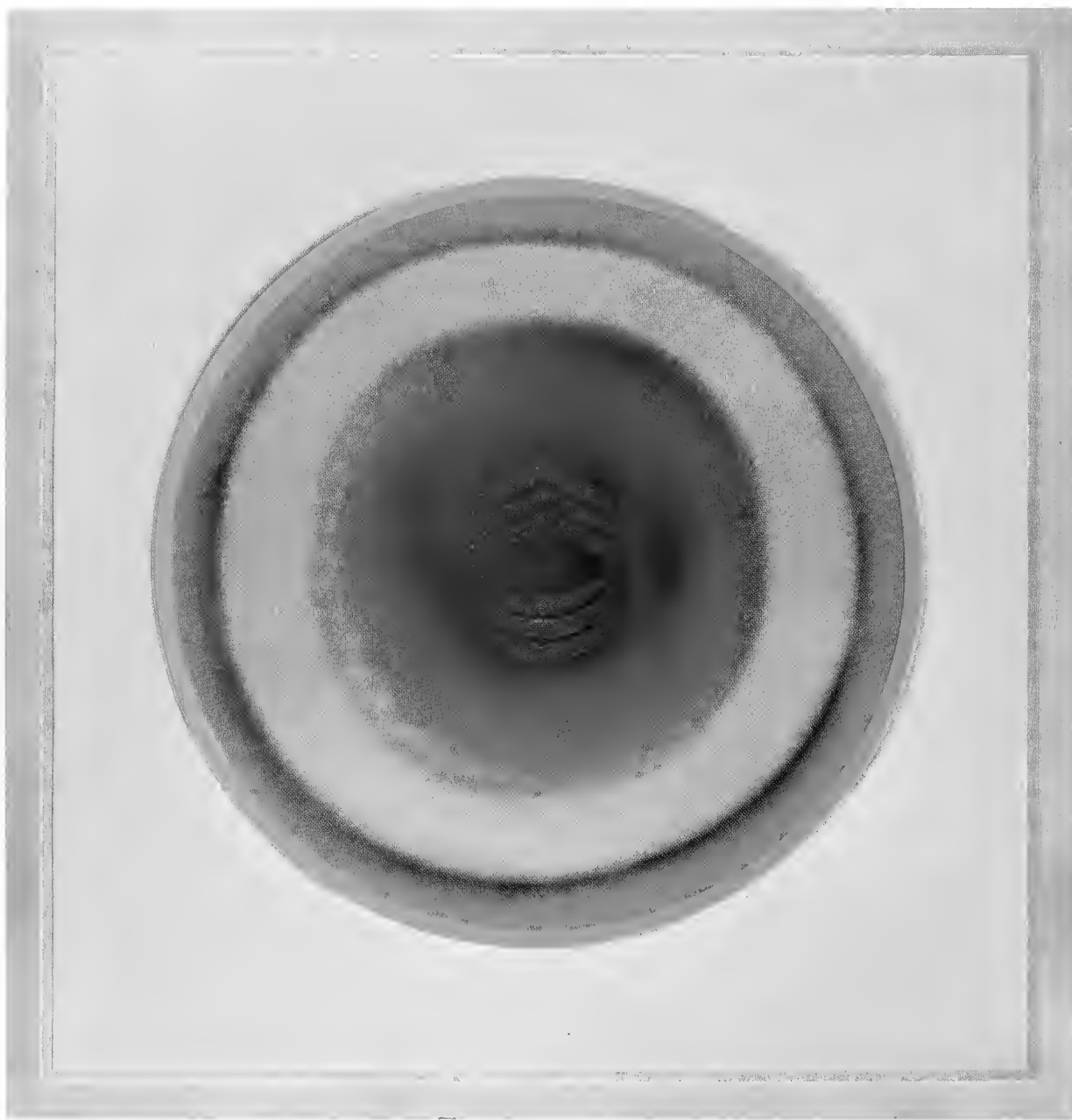


17. **Belle Star** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46 1/2"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

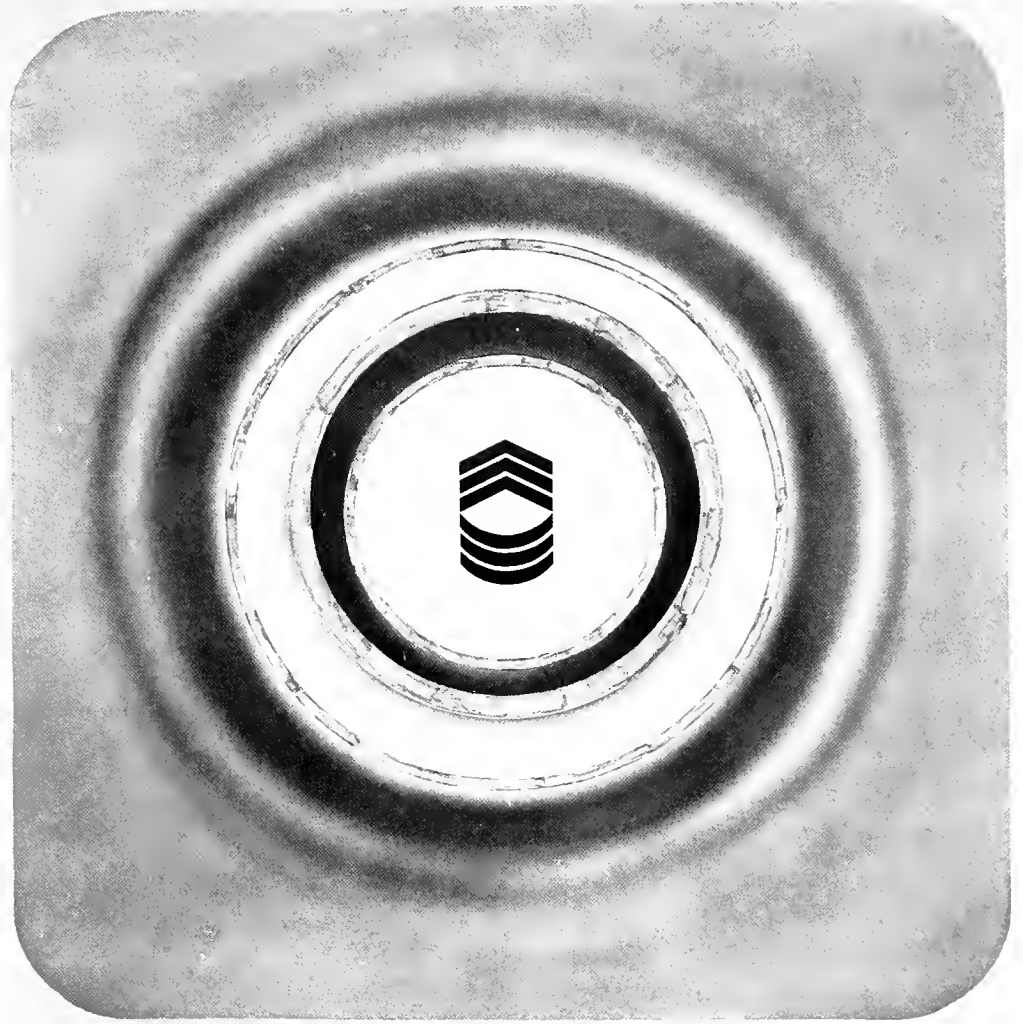




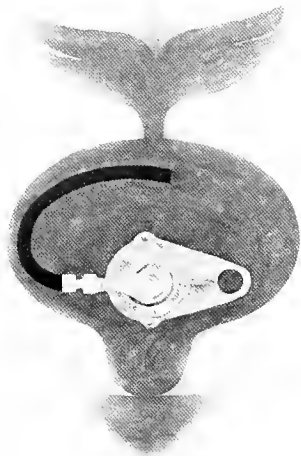
18. **Zachary** 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer  
on masonite 72" x 72"  
Lent by Artist Studio,  
Venice, California



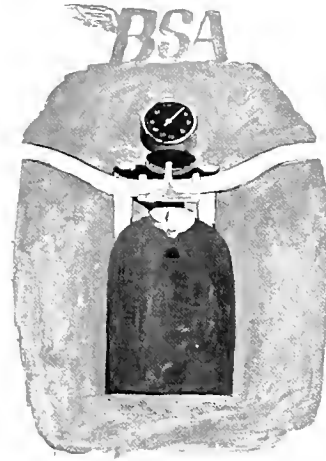
19. Lester 1961  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46 1/2"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John C. Denman, Bellevue, Washington



20. **Clint** 1961  
polymer, lacquer on masonite  
48" x 46½"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



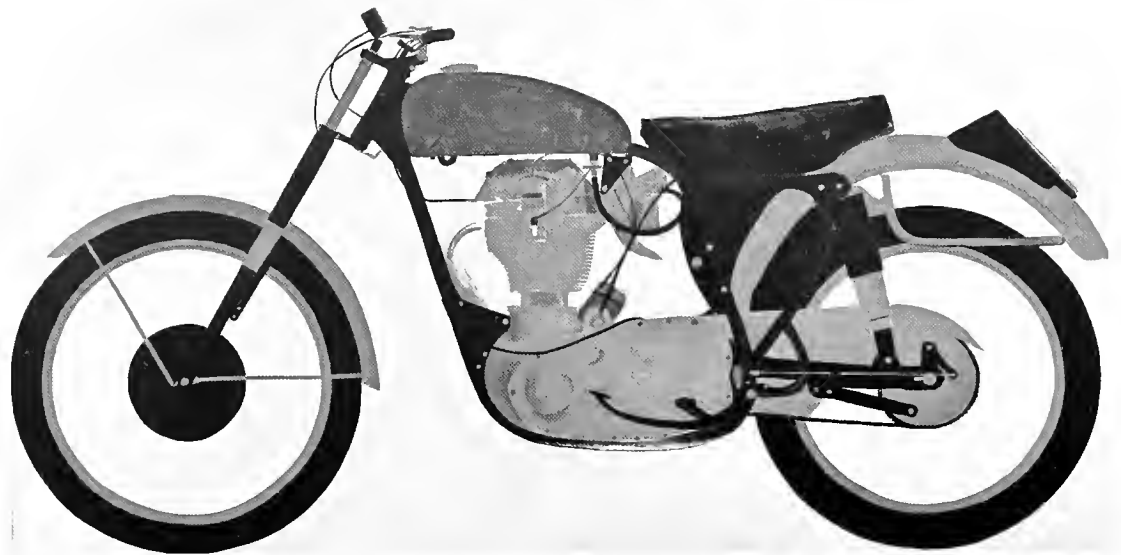
21. **Carburetor Floatbowl** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



22. **Gas Tank and Tachometer II** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Ed Ruscha, Los Angeles



23. **BSA** 1961  
oil on canvas  
36" x 34"  
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Merle S. Glick, Los Angeles

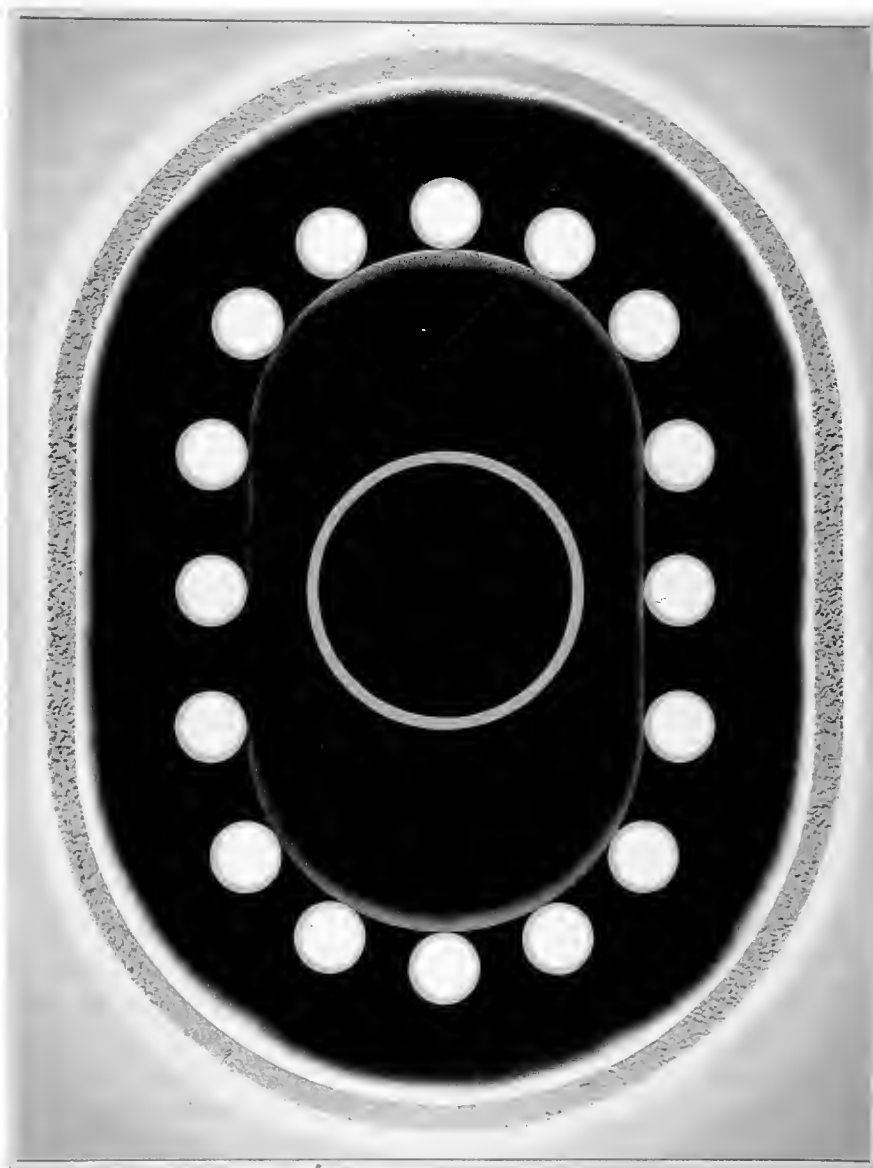


24. **Skinny's 21** 1961  
oil on canvas  
42" x 40"  
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. M. L. Sherwood, Beverly Hills

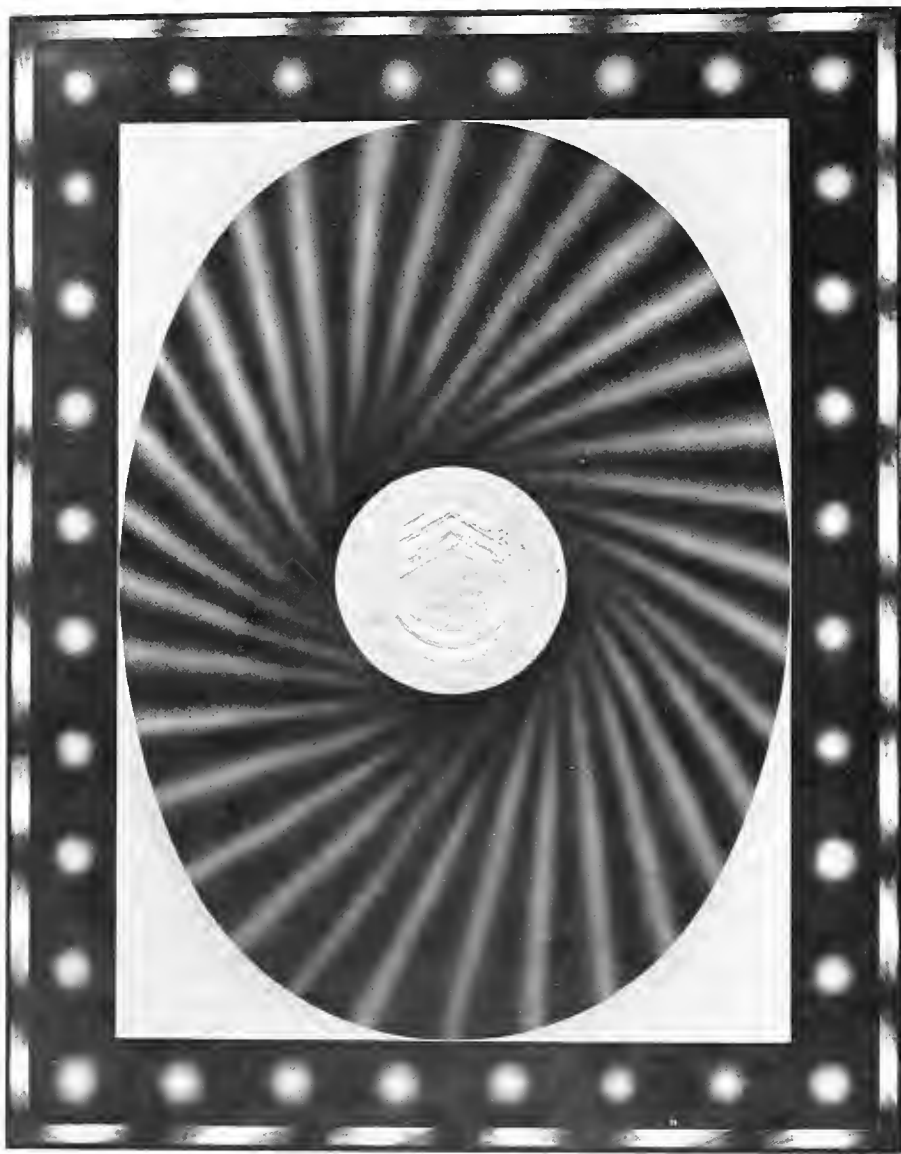


25. **Bela** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
62½" x 48½"  
Lent by Ed Moses, Santa Monica

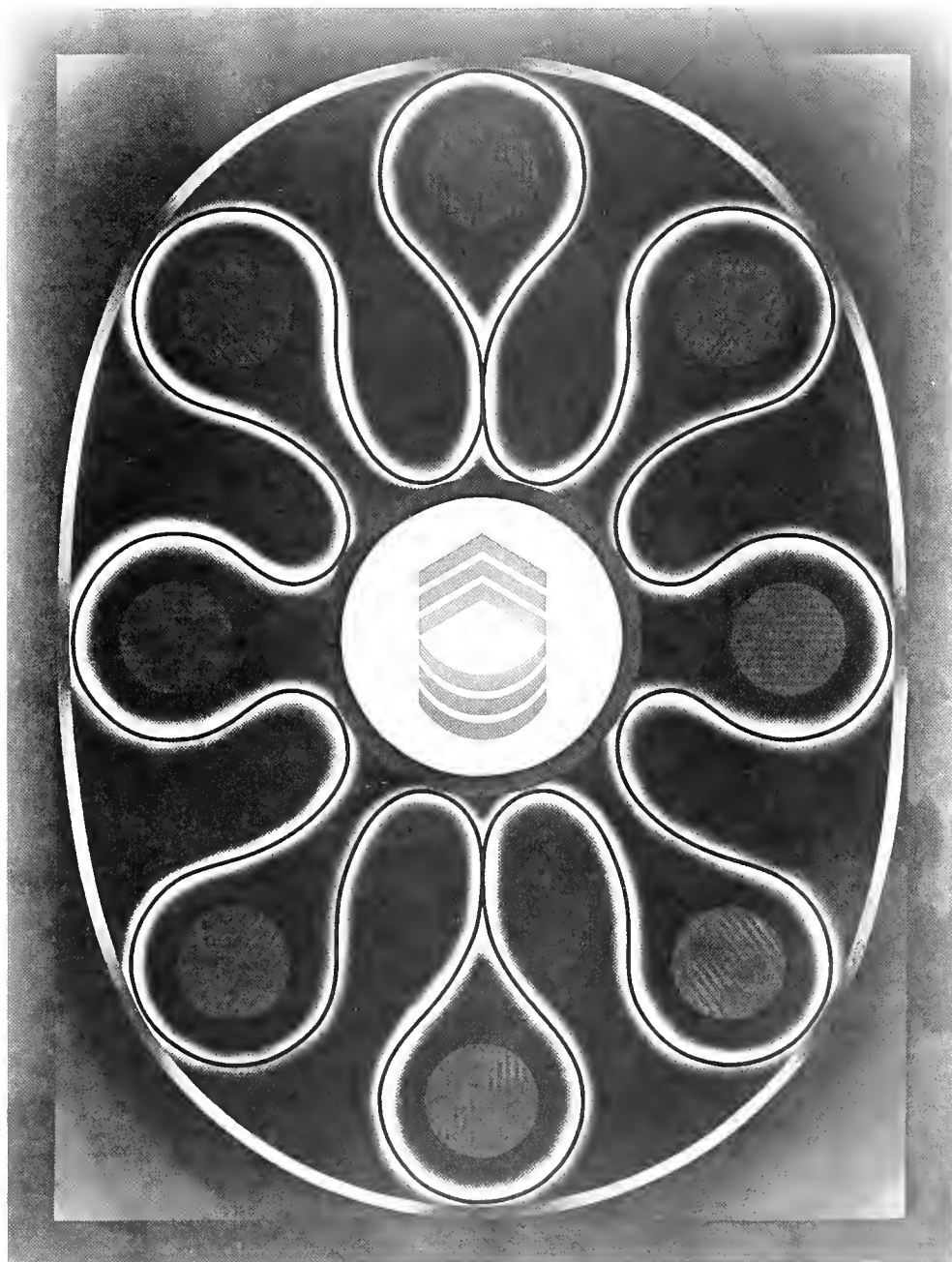




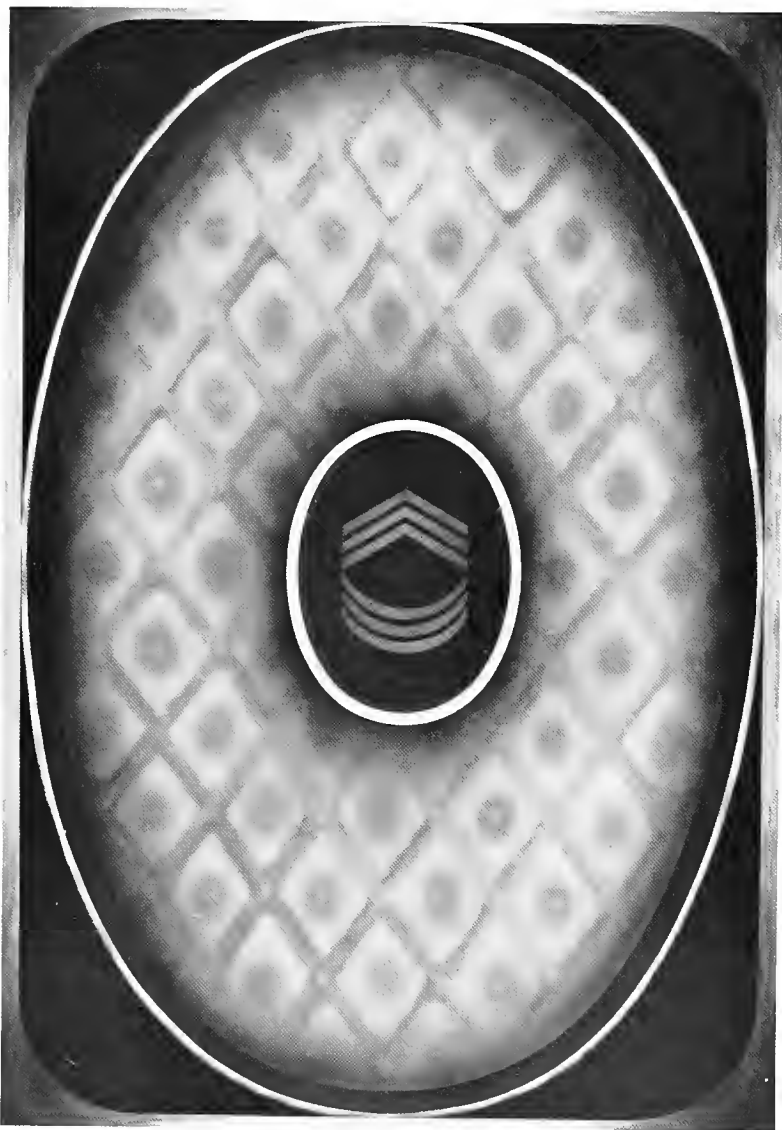
26. **Busby** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
80" x 60"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



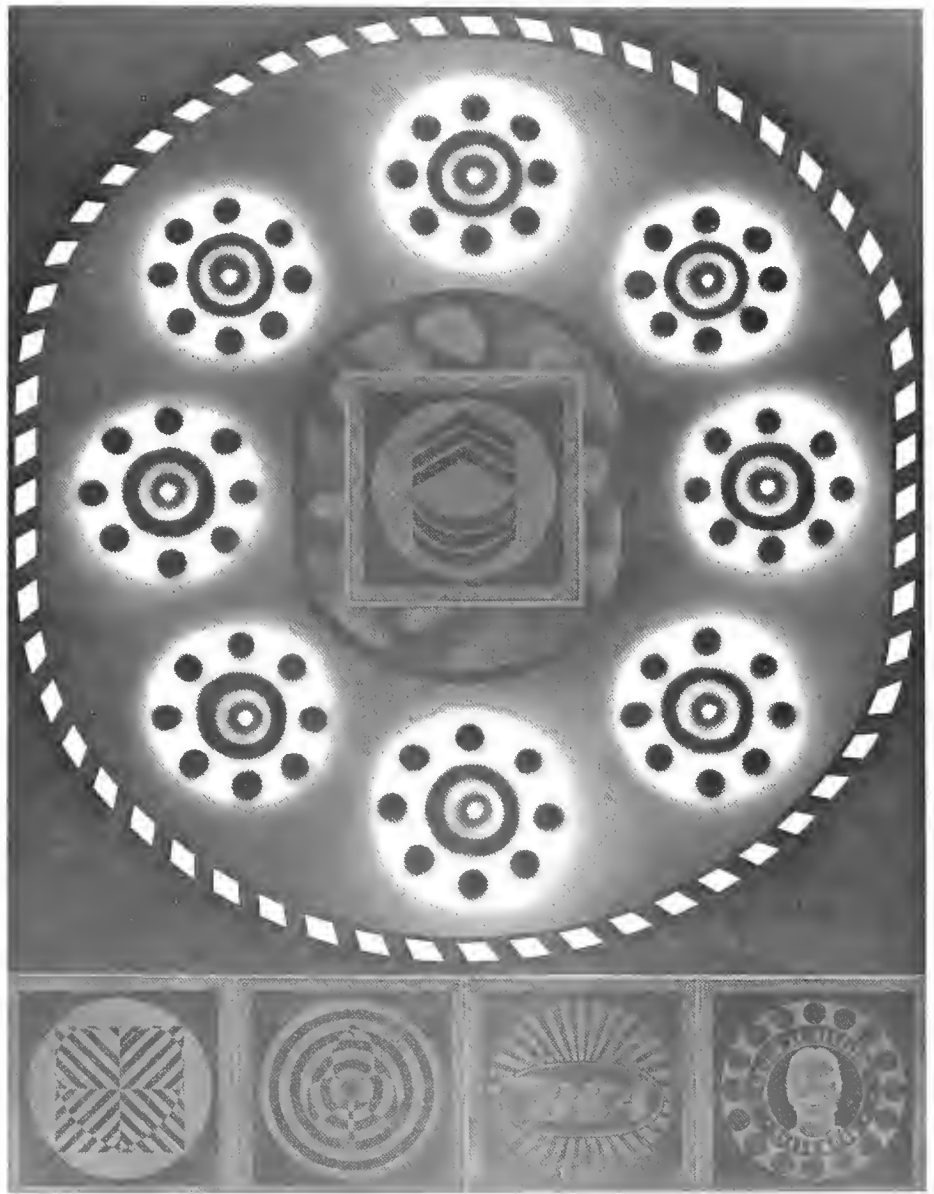
27. **Boris** 1963  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
62½" x 48½"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



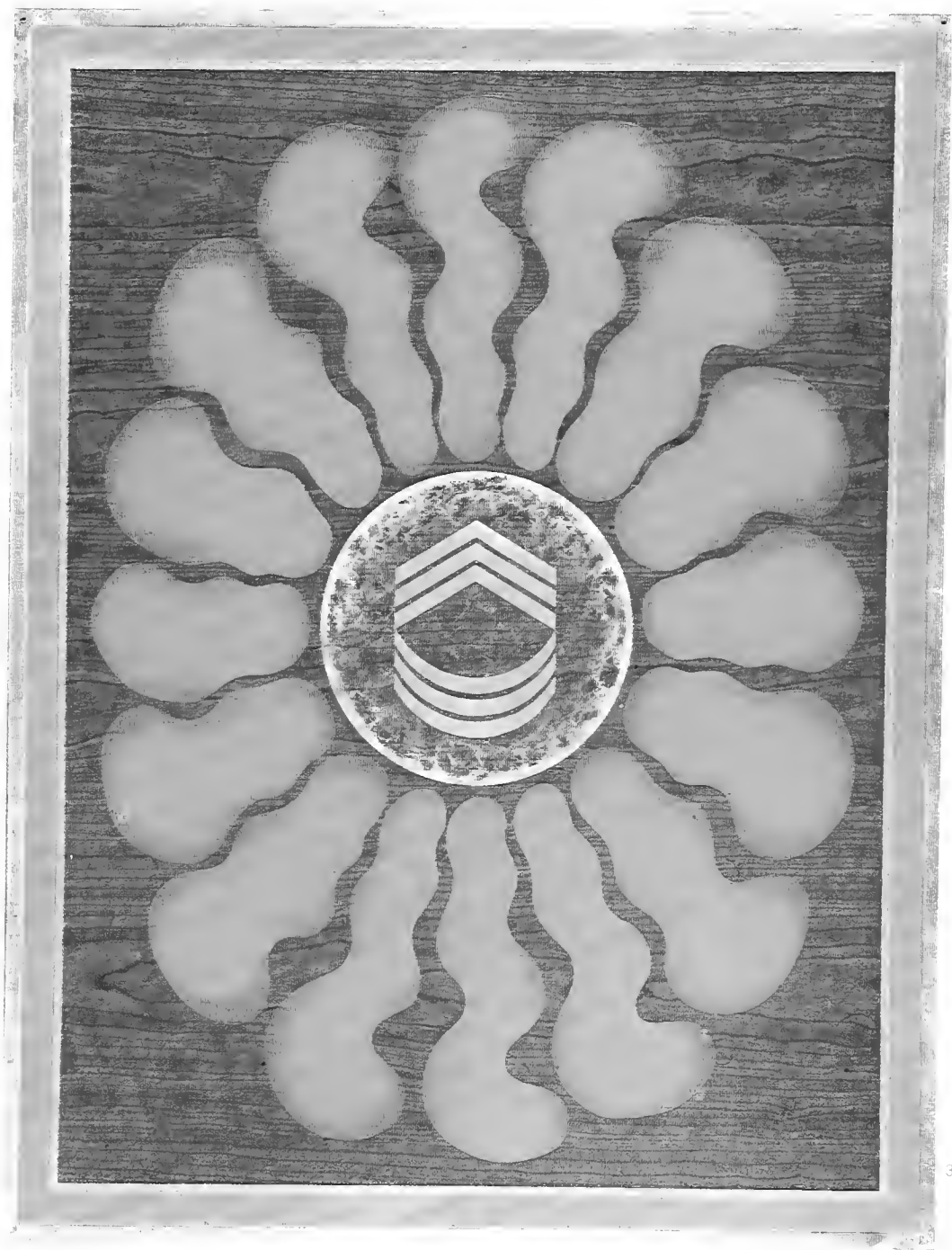
28. **Humphrey** 1963  
oil, liquetex, enamel, lacquer on masonite  
80" x 60"  
Lent by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art,  
Contemporary Art Council Funds



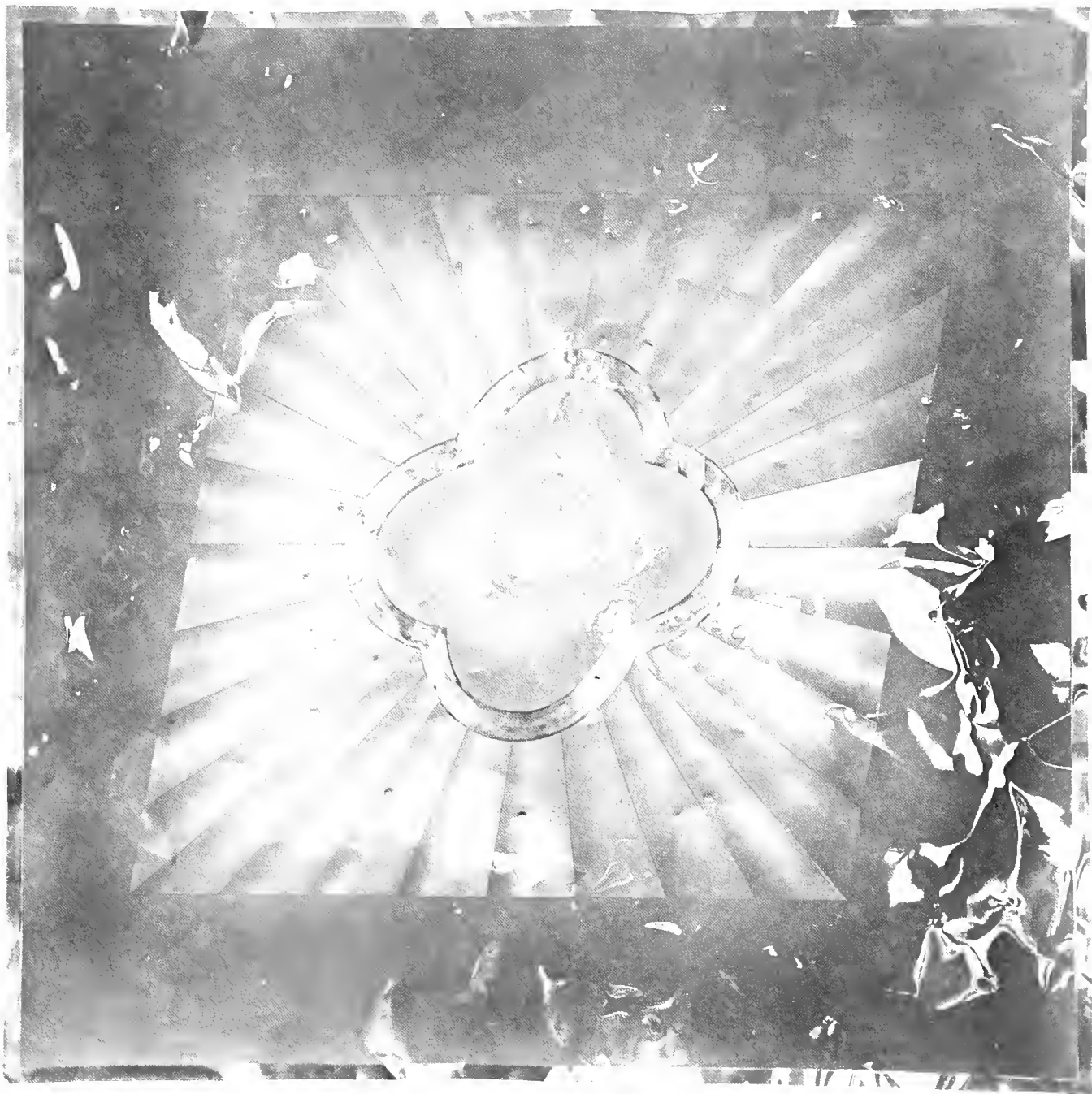
29. **Alfalfa** 1964  
oil, polymer, lacquer on masonite  
46 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach



30. **Chaney** 1965  
oil, lacquer on masonite  
60" x 45 1/2"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach

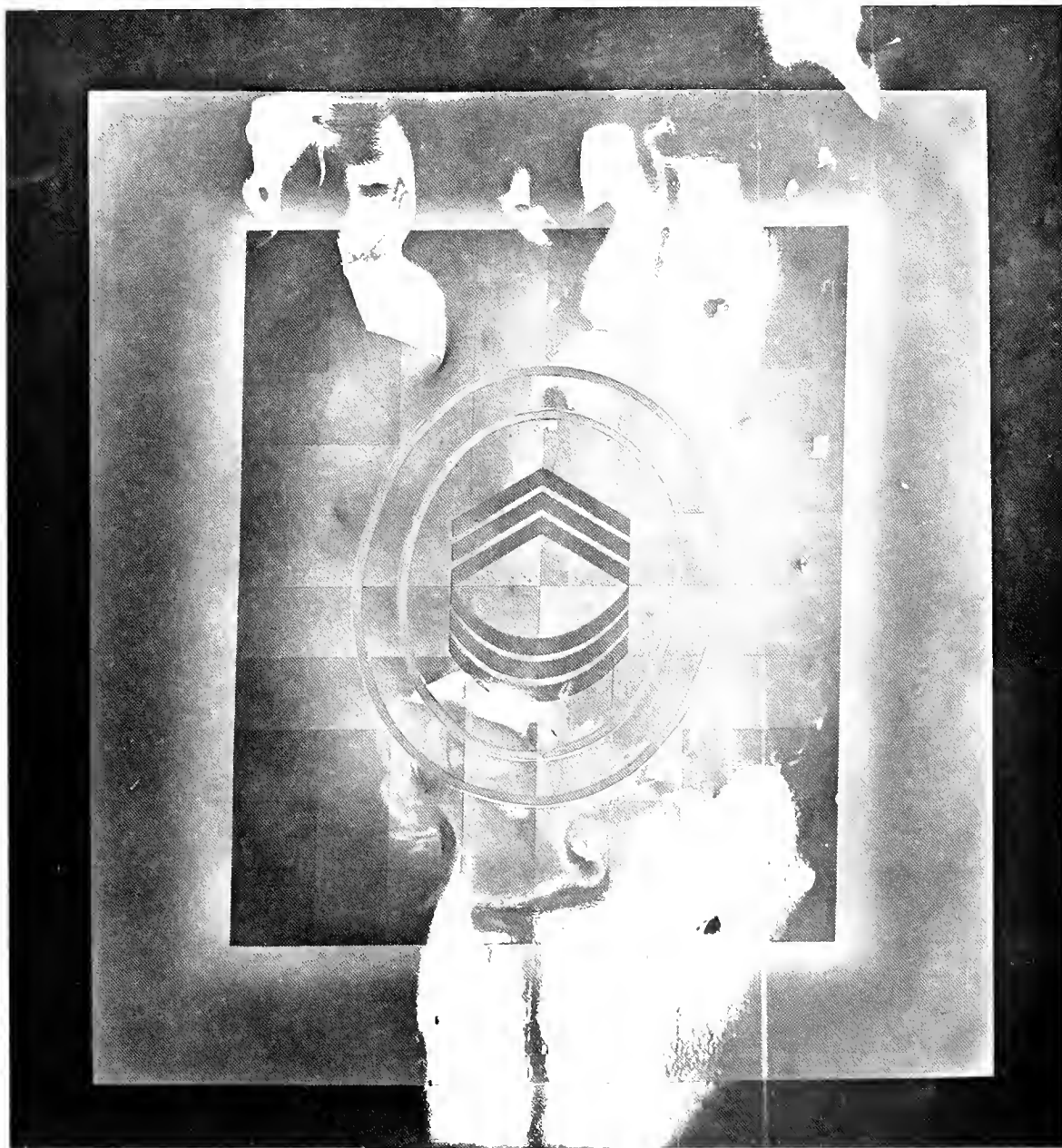


31. **Tubesteak** 1965  
lacquer on formica  
37" x 28"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



**Holy Smoke** 1966  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Laura Lee Stearns, Los Angeles





33. **John** 1966  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
34" x 31"  
Lent by Sterling Holloway, South Laguna Beach

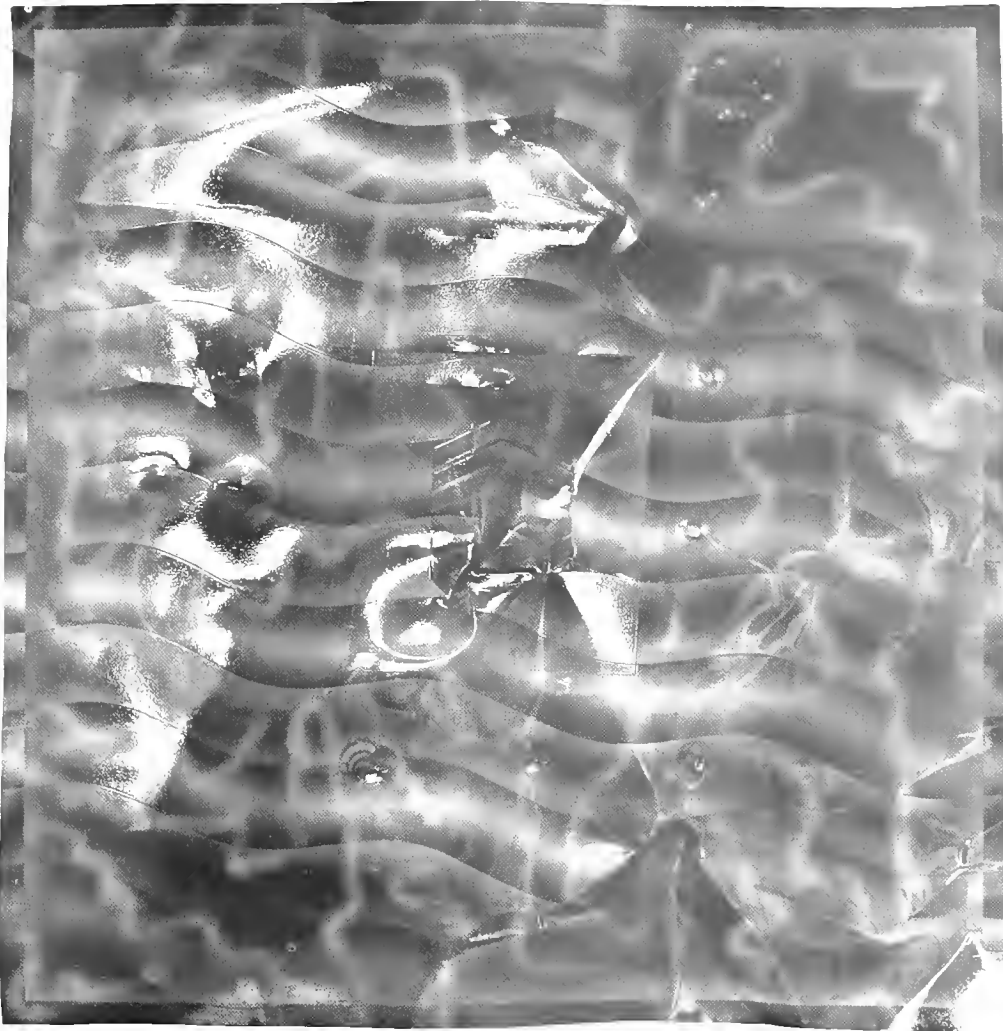




34 **Little Big Horn** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Richard O'Neill, Los Angeles



35 **Angel & The Badman** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Charles Cowles, New York



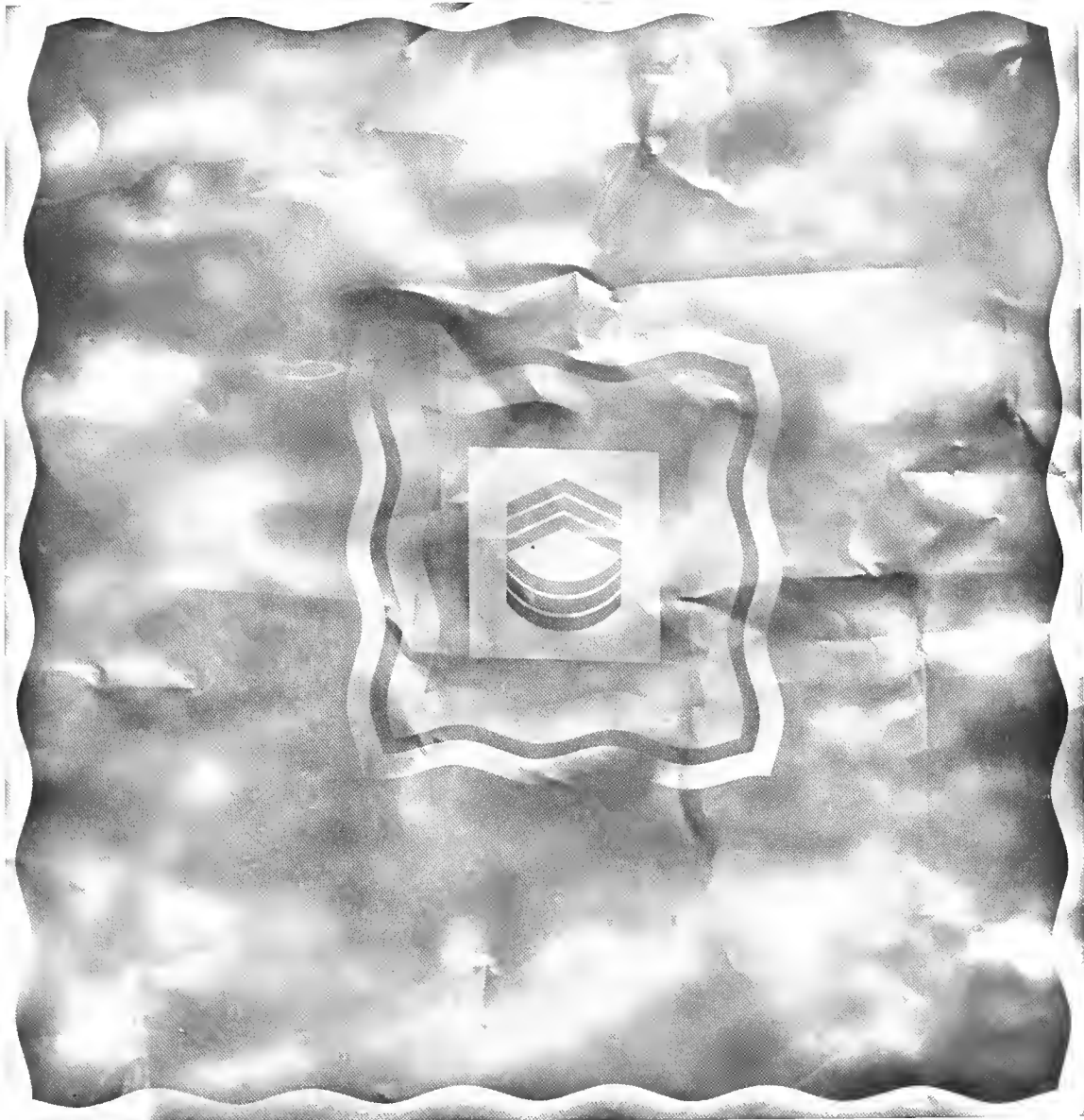
36. **Pittsburgh 1967**  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
26" x 25"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



37. **Sea Chase** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
26" x 25"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



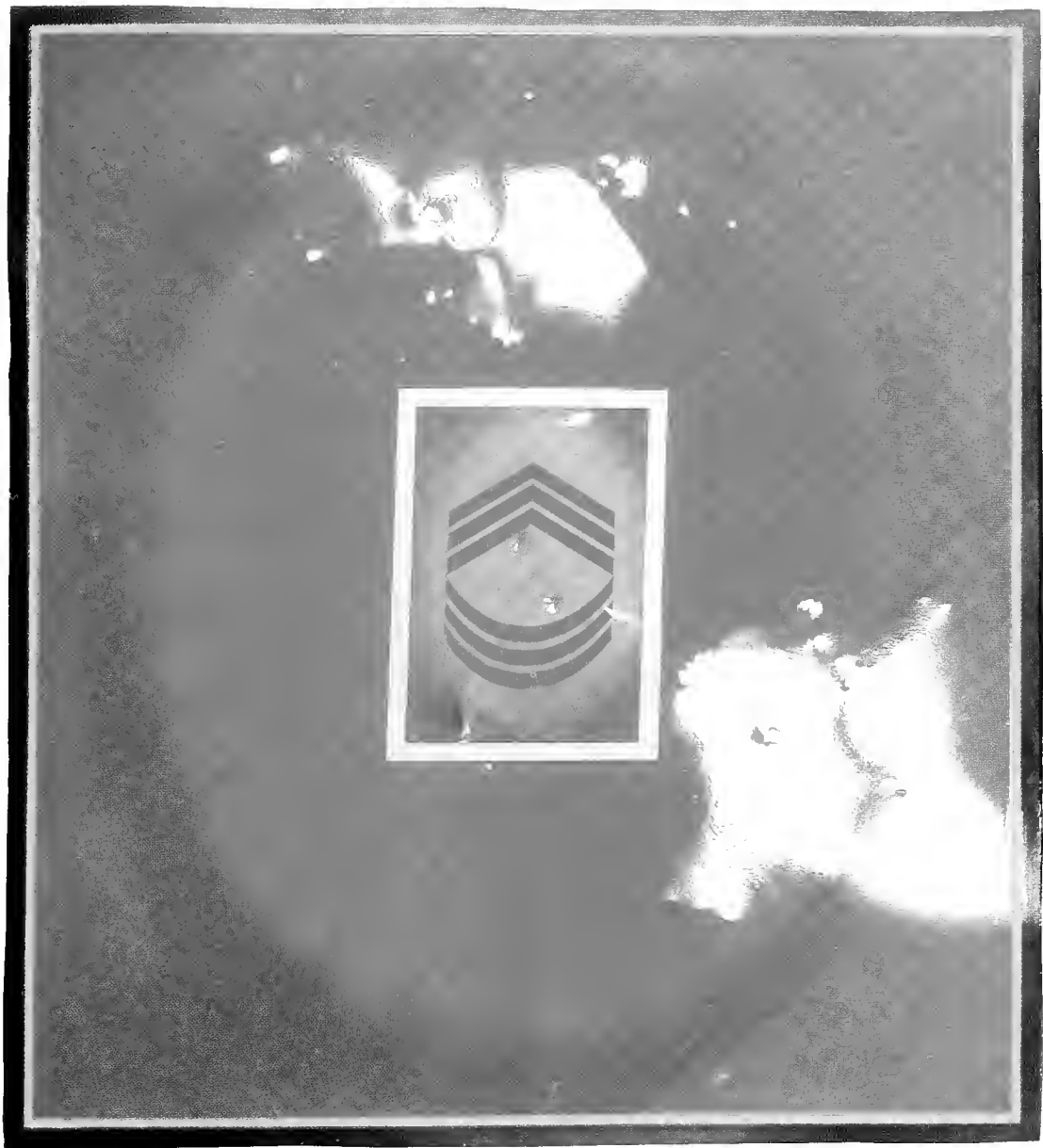
38. **In Old California** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
18" x 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Lent by Jackie and Ulf Greber, Beverly Hills



39. **The High and The Mighty** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

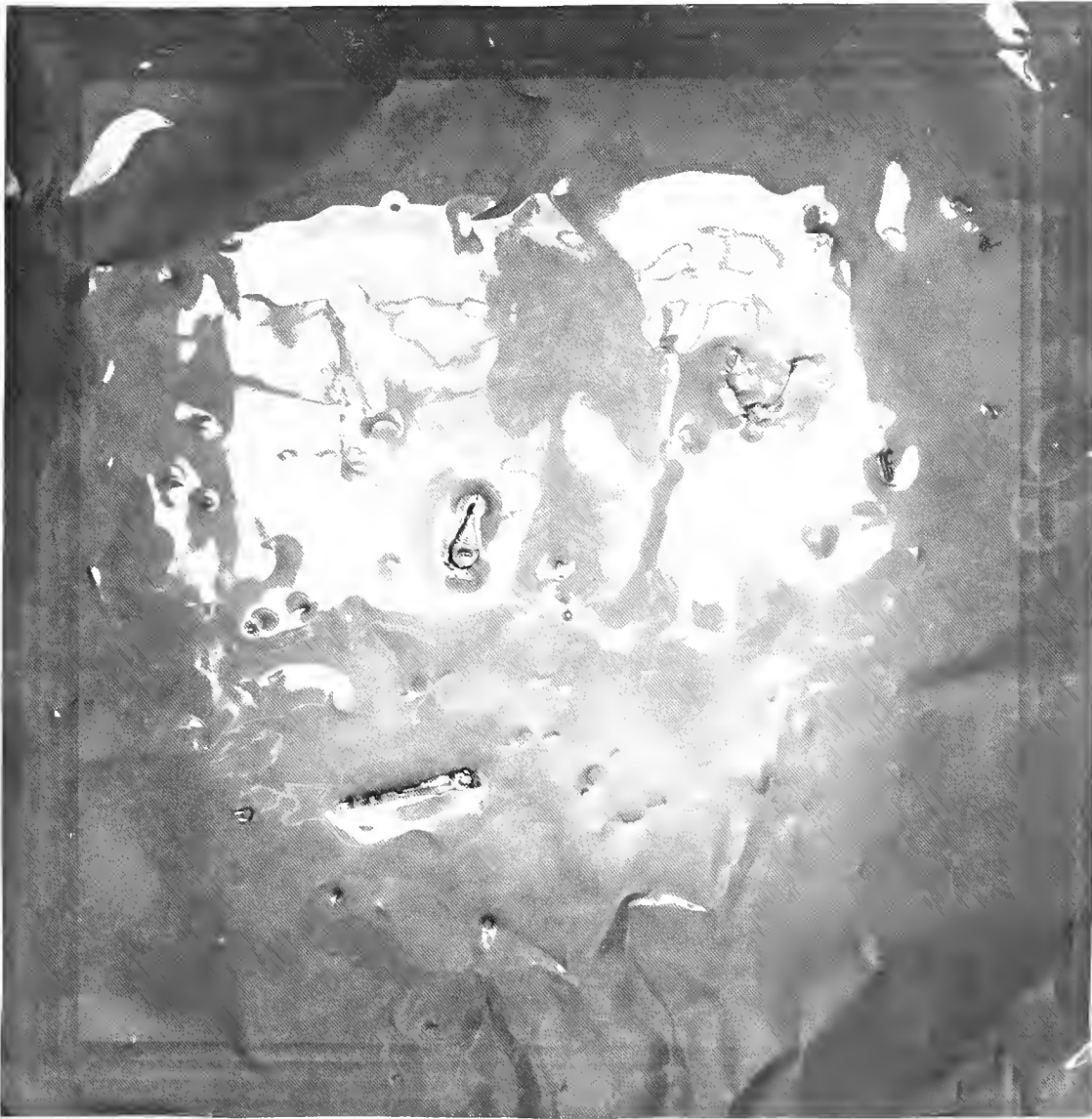


40. **Jim McLain** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Janie C. Lee, Dallas



41. **Comanchero** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
34" x 31"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Inch, Pacific Palisades





42. **The Sea Spoiler** 1967  
polyurethane, lacquer on aluminum  
60" x 58"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

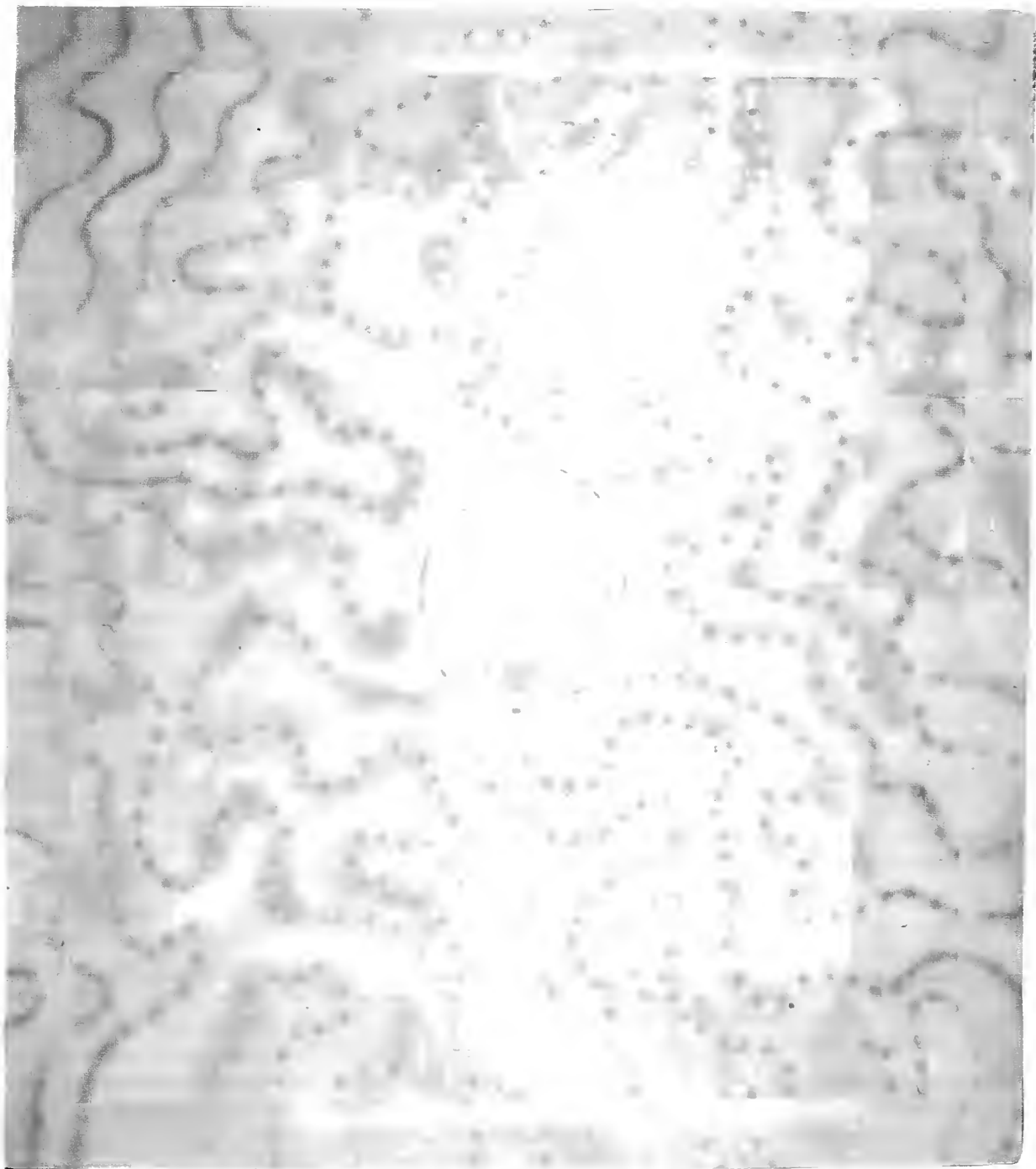




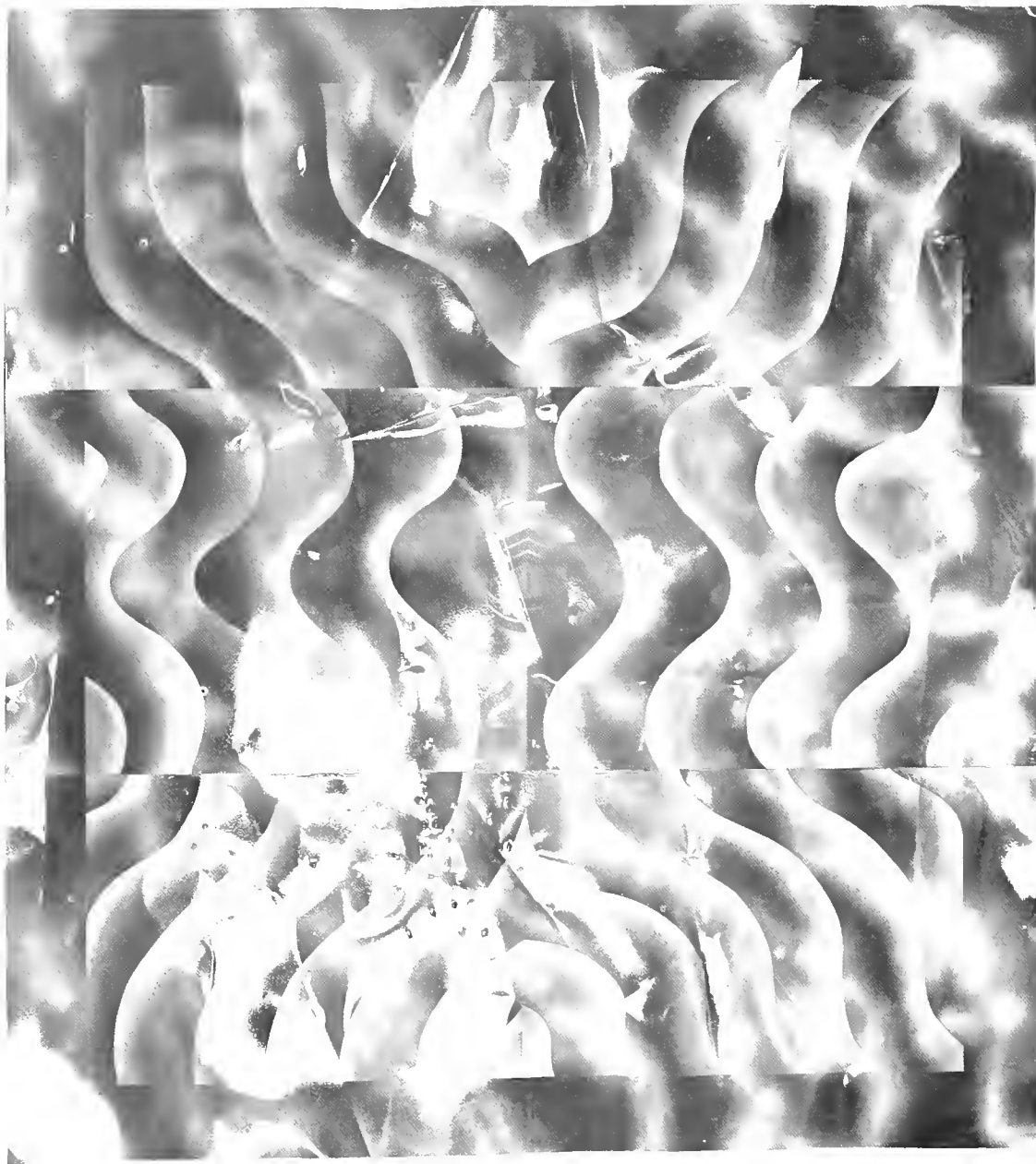
43. **Shepherd of the Hills** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
12" x 11 1/4"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California



44. **Lady From Louisiana** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
12" x 11 1/4"  
Lent by Mrs. Andrew Fuller, New York



45. **Hatari** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
87" x 77"  
Lent by the Kleiner Foundation,  
Beverly Hills



46. **Three Faces West** 1968  
polyester resin, lacquer on aluminum  
87" x 77"  
Lent by Artist Studio, Venice, California

## Exhibitions

### One-man Exhibitions:

- 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles.  
1962 Martha Jackson Gallery, New York.  
1968 San Francisco Museum of Art. "Motel Dracula." September 1 — November 2.

### Group Exhibitions:

- 1956 Six Gallery, San Francisco.  
1957 Exodus Gallery, San Pedro. "First Annual Los Angeles Area Drawing Exhibition."  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "Los Angeles Annual."  
1959 Bolles Gallery, San Francisco. "Los Angeles Painting."  
Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles. "Edward Kienholz and Billy Al Bengston: Collages."  
1962 Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California. "Pacific Profile." [Catalog with text by Constance Perkins.]  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California. "Pacific Coast Invitational."  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. "Fifty California Artists." October 23 — December 2. [Catalog with text by Lloyd Goodrich and George D. Culler.]  
1963 Art Institute of Chicago. "66th American Exhibition." January 11-February 10. [Catalog with text by A. James Speyer.]  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "Six More." July 24-August 25. [Catalog with text by Lawrence Alloway.]  
Musée cantonal des beaux-arts, Lausanne, Switzerland. "Miroir et Mémoire du Premier Salon International de Galeries Pilotes Lausanne." June 20-October 6. [Catalog published 1964.]  
Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, California. "Pop Art USA." September 7-29. [Catalog with text by John Coplans; reprinted in **Artforum**, vol. 2, no. 4, October, p. 30, ill. p. 27.]  
Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California. "Hard Edge and Emblem: New Work." November 12-December 26.  
San Francisco Museum of Art. "Pacific Coast Invitational." March 8-April 7. [Catalog.]  
1964 Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles. "The Studs."  
Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut. "Old Hundred." [Catalog.]  
1965 Milwaukee Art Center, Milwaukee. "Pop Art and the American Tradition." April 19-May 9. [Catalog with text by Tracy Atkinson.]

- VIII Biennial of the Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paulo, Brazil. [Catalog with text by Walter Hopps; biographical and bibliographical notes.]  
1966 Seattle Art Museum, Seattle. "Ten from Los Angeles." [Catalog with text by John Coplans; biographical and bibliographical notes, p. 54.]  
University of California at Irvine Art Gallery. "Abstract Expressionist Ceramics." October-November. [Catalog with text by John Coplans.]  
1967 American Federation of Art, New York. "From Synchronism On."  
American Federation of Art, New York. "Small Paintings for Museum Collections."  
California State College at Fullerton Art Gallery. "Portraits of Artists." July. [Photographs by John Waggaman.]  
Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California. "Selections from the Charles Cowles Collection." June 20-July 16. [Shown afterward at the Stanford University Art Gallery, California.]  
Lytton Center for the Visual Arts, Los Angeles. "Artists' Artists."  
Lytton Center for the Visual Arts, Los Angeles. "California Festival."  
Museum of Modern Art, New York. "Recent Acquisitions."  
Portland Art Museum, Portland. "Ninety-four Works from the Collection of Sterling Holloway." January 24-February 12. [Catalog with illustration on cover.]  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California. "Three Young Collections." January 15-February 26. [Selections from the collections of Donald and Lynn Factor, Dennis and Brooke Hopper, Andre and Dory Previn. Catalog.]  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. "1967 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting." December 13, 1967-February 4, 1968. [Catalog.]  
1968 California State College Art Gallery, Los Angeles. "California Small Images Exhibition." December 4-January 11, 1968. [Catalog.]  
Jewish Museum, New York. "Suites — Recent Prints."  
Lytton Center for the Visual Arts, Los Angeles. "Mini Things." January-February.  
Pomona College Art Gallery, Claremont, California. "Speed Sculpture." March. [Exhibition of motorcycles selected by Billy Al Bengston, and related paintings.]  
University of California at San Diego Art Gallery. "Los Angeles to New York." February 13-March 10.

## Bibliography Reviews and articles:

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- Nordland, Gerald. "At the County Museum," **Frontier**, vol. 10, no. 11, September, p. 20.
- 1960 Langsner, Jules. "Art News from Los Angeles," **Art News**, vol. 59, no. 1, March, p. 51. [Review of one-man show, Ferus Gallery.]
- Nordland, Gerald. "Valentines Etcetera," **Frontier**, vol. 11, no. 4, February, p. 18, ill., p. 18 [Review of one-man show, Ferus Gallery.]
- Nordland, Gerald. "Art," **Frontier**, vol. 11, no. 7, May, pp. 20-21. [Review of "50 Paintings by 37 Artists from the Los Angeles Area," UCLA.]
- 1962 "Artists Take to the Place: Wide Open and Way Out," **Life**, October 19.
- "Brush-strokes of a 4-Stroke," **Motorcyclist**, no. 772, February, p. 20, ill., p. 20.
- Langsner, Jules. "Los Angeles Letter," **Art International**, vol. 6, no. 2, March, p. 48, ill., p. 47. [Review of one-man show, Ferus Gallery.]
- Raynor, Vivian. "Fun Art at Jackson," **Arts Magazine**, vol. 36 no. 8, September, p. 50. [Review of one-man show, Martha Jackson Gallery.]
- Sandler, Irving H. "New Names This Month — Billy Bengston," **Art News**, vol. 61, no. 3, May, p. 18. [Review of one-man show, Martha Jackson Gallery.]
- Seldis, Henry J. "In the Galleries: Automobile Paint on Masonite in Vibrant," **Los Angeles Times**, November 18. [Review of one-man show, Ferus Gallery.]
- 1963 Coplans, John. "Notes from San Francisco," **Art International**, vol. 7, no. 8, October, pp. 93-94. [Review of "Pop Art USA," Oakland Art Museum.]
- Factor, Donald. "'Six Painters and the Object,' and 'Six More' at Los Angeles County Museum of Art," **Artforum**, vol. 2, no. 3, September, p. 13, ill. p. 15. [Review.]
- Fried, Michael. "New York Letter," **Art International**, vol. 7, no. 9, December, p. 68. [Review of show with 10 Americans, Martha Jackson Gallery.]
- Langsner, Jules. "Los Angeles Letter," **Art International**, vol. 7, no. 1, January, p. 82, ill., p. 82. [Review of one-man show, Ferus Gallery.]
- Leider, Philip and John Coplans. "West Coast Art: Three Images," **Artforum**, vol. 1, no. 12, June, pp. 21-25. [Review of "Pacific Coast Invitational," San Francisco Museum of Art, among other things.]
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- Kozloff, Max. "West Coast Art: Vital Pathology," **The Nation**, August 24, pp. 76-79.
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- 1966 "California Fashion: Dressing for the Strip," **Look**, vol. 30, no. 13, June 28, pp. 74-75.
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- "Place in the Sun," **Time**, August 30, pp. 38-41, ill. p. 40.

Right: Billy Al Bengston in scrambles at Corriganville, 1961. 2nd place; 250cc Amateur.



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Right: Billy Al Bengston at  
Ascot Park, Gardena, 1964,  
winning 1st place Amateur.  
Photo: Walt Mahoney.





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Right: Billy Al Bengston  
on a "Thunderbike" at  
Whiteman Stadium,  
Pacoima, 1968. D.N.F.



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